



HERMIT SAINTS

LIVES
OF
THE ENGLISH SAINTS.

Hermit Saints.

ST. GUNDLEUS.

ST. EDELWALD.

ST. HELIER.

ST. BETTELIN.

ST. HERBERT.

ST. NEOT.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW.

MANSUETI HEREDITABUNT TERRAM, ET DELECTABUNTUR IN
MULTITUDINE PACIS.

LONDON :
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ADVERTISEMENT.

The following Lives are the work of several persons who have written independently of each other, though their views will be found to be coincident on some important and difficult points which are brought into discussion in the course of the narrative. The Legend of St. Bettelin belongs to more than one author.

Holy Thursday, 1844.

A LEGEND OF

St. Gundleus,

HERMIT IN WALES, ABOUT A. D. 500.

THE Christian lives in the past and in the future, and in the unseen ; in a word, he lives in no small measure in the unknown. And it is one of his duties, and a part of his work, to make the unknown known ; to create within him an image of what is absent, and to realize by faith what he does not see. For this purpose he is granted certain outlines and rudiments of the truth, and from thence he learns to draw it out into its full proportions and its substantial form,—to expand and complete it ; whether it be the absolute and perfect truth, or truth under a human dress, or truth in such a shape as is most profitable for him. And the process, by which the word which has been given him, “returns not void,” but brings forth and buds and is accomplished and prospers, is Meditation.

It is Meditation¹ which does for the Christian what Investigation does for the children of men. Investigation may not be in his power, but he may always

¹ Some excellent remarks on this subject will be found in the Introduction to a work which has appeared since these pages were sent to press, “Life of Christ, from the Latin of St. Bonaventura.”

meditate. For Investigation he may possess no materials or instruments ; he needs but little aid or appliance from without for Meditation. The barley loaves and few small fishes are made to grow under his hand ; the oil fills vessel after vessel till not an empty one remains ; the water-pots become the wells of a costly liquor ; and the very stones of the desert germinate and yield him bread. He trades with his Lord's money as a good steward ; that in the end his Lord may receive His own with usury.

This is the way of the divinely illuminated mind, whether in matters of sacred doctrine or of sacred history. Here we are concerned with the latter. I say then, when a true and loyal lover of the brethren attempts to contemplate persons and events of time past, and to bring them before him as actually existing and occurring, it is plain, he is at loss about the details ; he has no information about those innumerable accidental points, which might have been or have happened this way or that way, but in the very person and the very event did happen one way,—which were altogether uncertain beforehand, but which have been rigidly determined ever since. The scene, the parties, the speeches, the grouping, the succession of particulars, the beginning, the ending, matters such as these he is obliged to imagine in one way, if he is to imagine them at all. The case is the same in the art of painting ; the artist gives stature, gesture, feature, expression, to his figures ; what sort of an abstraction or a nonentity would he produce without this allowance ? it would be like telling him to paint a dream, or relations and qualities, or panic terrors, or scents and sounds, if you confine him to truth in the mere letter ; or he must evade the difficulty, with the village artist in the story, who

having to represent the overthrow of the Egyptians in the sea, on their pursuing the Israelites, daubed a board with red paint, with a *nota bene* that the Israelites had got safe to land, and the Egyptians were all drowned. Of necessity then does the painter allow his imagination to assist his facts ; of necessity and with full right ; and he will make use of this indulgence well or ill, according to his talents, his knowledge, his skill, his ethical peculiarities, his general cultivation of mind.

In like manner, if we would meditate on any passage of the gospel history, we must insert details indefinitely many, in order to meditate at all ; we must fancy motives, feelings, meanings, words, acts, as our connecting links between fact and fact as recorded. Hence holy men have before now put dialogues into the mouths of sacred persons, not wishing to intrude into things unknown, not thinking to deceive others into a belief of their own mental creations, but to impress upon themselves and upon their brethren, as by a seal or mark, the substantiveness and reality of what Scripture has adumbrated by one or two bold and severe lines. Ideas are one and simple ; but they gain an entrance into our minds, and live within us, by being broken into detail.

Hence it is, that so much has been said and believed of a number of Saints with so little historical foundation. It is not that we may lawfully despise or refuse a great gift and benefit, historical testimony, and the intellectual exercises which attend on it, study, research, and criticism ; for in the hands of serious and believing men they are of the highest value. We do not refuse them, but in the cases in question, we have them not. The bulk of Christians have them not ; the multitude has them not ; the multitude forms its

view of the past, not from antiquities, not critically, not in the letter ; but it developes its small portion of true knowledge into something which is like the very truth though it be not it, and which stands for the truth when it is but like it. Its evidence is a legend ; its facts are a symbol ; its history a representation ; its drift is a moral.

Thus then is it with the biographies and reminiscences of the Saints. “ Some there are which have no memorial, and are as though they had never been ;” others are known to have lived and died, and are known in little else. They have left a name, but they have left nothing besides. Or the place of their birth, or of their abode, or of their death, or some one or other striking incident of their life, gives a character to their memory. Or they are known by martyrologies or services, or by the traditions of a neighbourhood, or by the title or the decorations of a Church. Or they are known by certain miraculous interpositions which are attributed to them. Or their deeds and sufferings belong to countries far away, and the report of them comes musical and low over the broad sea. Such are some of the small elements, which, when more is not known, faith is fain to receive, love dwells on, meditation unfolds, disposes, and forms ; till by the sympathy of many minds, and the concert of many voices, and the lapse of many years, a certain whole figure is developed with words and actions, a history and a character,—which is indeed but the *portrait* of the original, yet is as much as a portrait, an imitation rather than a copy, a likeness on the whole, but in its particulars more or less the work of imagination. It is but collateral and parallel to the truth ; it is the truth under assumed conditions ; it brings out a true idea, yet by inaccurate or defec-

tive means of exhibition ; it savours of the age, yet it is the offspring from what is spiritual and everlasting. It is the picture of a saint, who did other miracles, if not these ; who went through sufferings, who wrought righteousness, who died in faith and peace, —of this we are sure ; we are not sure, should it so happen, of the when, the where, the how, the why, and the whence.

Who, for instance, can reasonably find fault with the Acts of St. Andrew, even though they be not authentic, for describing the Apostle as saying on sight of his cross, “ Receive, O Cross, the disciple of Him who once hung on thee, my Master Christ ? ” For was not the Saint sure to make an exclamation at the sight, and must it not have been in substance such as this ? And would much difference be found between his very words when translated, and these imagined words, if they be such, drawn from what is probable, and received upon rumours issuing from the time and place ? And when St. Agnes was brought into that horrible house of devils, are we not quite sure that angels were with her, even though we do not know any one of the details ? What is there wanton then or superstitious in singing the Antiphon, “ Agnes entered the place of shame, and found the Lord’s angel waiting for her,” even though the fact come to us on no authority ? And again, what matters it though the angel that accompanies us on our way be not called Raphael, if there be such a protecting spirit, who at God’s bidding does not despise the least of Christ’s flock in their journeyings ? And what is it to me though heretics have mixed the true history of St. George with their own fables or impieties, if a Christian George, Saint and Martyr there was, as we believe ?

And we in after time, who look back upon the legendary picture, cannot for very caution's sake and reverence, reject the whole, part of which, we know not how much, may be, or certainly is, true. Nor have we means to separate ascertained fact from fiction ; the one and the other are worked in together. We can do nothing else but accept what has come down to us as symbolical of the unknown, and use it in a religious way for religious uses. At the best it is the true record of a divine life ; but at the very worst it is not less than the pious thoughts of religious minds,—thoughts frequent, recurrent, habitual, of minds many in many generations.

The brief notice of St. Gundleus, which is now to follow, is an illustration of some of these remarks. It will be but legendary ; it would be better, were it not so ; but in fact, nothing remains on record except such tokens and symbols of the plain truth, in honour of one whose name has continued in the Church, and to the glory of Him who wrote it in her catalogue.

St. Gundleus was a king or chieftain, whose territory lay in Glamorganshire, and he lived about A. D. 500. He was the father of the great St. Cadoc, and his wife was Gladusa, the eldest of ten daughters of King Brachan. Of these ladies one was St. Almehda ; another St. Keyna ; a third, little deserving any honourable memory herself, was the mother of St. David.

One night a supernatural voice broke in upon the slumbers of St. Gundleus and Gladusa. "The King of heaven, the Ruler of earth, hath sent me hither : " thus it spoke ; "that ye may turn to His ministry with your whole heart. You He calls and invites, as He hath chosen and redeemed you, when He mounted on

the Cross. I will show you the straight path, which ye must keep, unto the inheritance of God : lift up your minds, and for what is perishable, slight not your souls. On the river's bank there is a rising ground ; and where a white steed is standing, there is the place of thy habitation."

The king arose in the morning ; he gave up his sovereignty to his son Cadoc ; he left his home, he proceeded to the hill, and found the animal described. There he built a Church, and there he began an abstinent and saintly life ; his dress a haircloth ; his drink water ; his bread of barley mixed with wood ashes. He rose at midnight and plunged into cold water ; and by day he laboured for his livelihood. Holy Cadoc his son, who at length became Abbot of Carvan, a neighbouring monastery, often came to him, and made him of good heart, reminding him that the crown is the reward, not of beginners, but of those who persevere in good things.

The hill wanted water ; St. Gundleus offered up his prayers to God, and touched the dry soil with his staff ; a spring issued from it clear and unfailing.

When his end was approaching, he sent to St. Dubricius, Bishop of Llandaff, and to St. Cadoc his own son. From the hands of the latter he received his last communion, and he passed to the Lord on the 29th of March. An angelic host was seen about his tomb, and sick people, on invoking his intercession, were healed.

His Church, which became his shrine, was near the sea and exposed to plunderers. Once when pirates from the Orkneys had broken into it, and carried off its contents, a storm overtook them on their return, and, dashing their vessels against each other, sunk all but two. At another time a robber, who had made off

with a sacred chalice and vestments, was confronted by the sea apparently mounting up against him and overwhelming him. He was forced back into the Church, where he remained till morning, when he was arrested, and, but for the Bishop of Llandaff, would have undergone capital punishment.

Whether St. Gundleus led this very life, and wrought these very miracles, I do not know ; but I do know that they are Saints whom the Church so accounts, and I believe that, though this account of him cannot be proved, it is a symbol of what he did and what he was, a picture of his saintliness, and a specimen of his power.

A

Legend of St. Helier,

HERMIT IN JERSEY.

INTRODUCTION.

THE following pages are principally derived from the Acts of St. Helier, published by the Bollandists among the Lives of Saints honoured on the 16th of July. The story is here called a legend, because from the mistakes made by the author of the Acts, and from the distance of time at which he lived from the age of the Saint, many things which he advances rest on little authority. From the occurrence of the word Normannia, the Bollandists argue that he lived after the ninth century, at least three hundred years after St. Helier. He also mistakes Childebert the first for Childebert the second, and places the events which he relates after Brunehault, the famous queen of Austrasia. Again the vague words *Australis climatis fortissimus*, applied to Sigebert, looks very like a perversion of Austrasia, the ancient name for the eastern part of France. On the other hand, it is not by any means meant to assert that the whole of the narrative is fiction. The author of the Acts, from several notices which will appear in the course of the legend, was acquainted with Jersey ; he

therefore represents the traditions of his time current in the island with respect to St. Helier. Traces of that tradition remain to this day in the islands, and what is now called St. Helier's hermitage agrees completely with the description of the place given in the Acts printed by the Bollandists. Again the journey from Terouenne (a town near Boulogne, destroyed by the Emperor Charles V.) along the coast to Normandy, is described with accuracy, and traces of the honour formerly paid to the Saint in the diocese of Boulogne are recorded in the commentary of the Bollandists prefixed to the Acts. What is perhaps most important of all, these Acts are corroborated by the early Acts of St. Marculfus in many points, as for instance in the story of the repulsion of the Saxon fleet, and in the number of the inhabitants said to be in the islands. The Bollandists in the first volume of May assign the life of St. Marculfus to a period not later than the year 640, within the first century after St. Helier flourished. From all this, it appears probable that the leading facts of the story are true. We may even be warranted in supposing that God was pleased, for the conversion of the wild population of these islands, to work miracles by the hand of His servant. It is however still an open question, whether the particular miracles here recorded were those worked by St. Helier ; and it may here be observed that the miracles said to have occurred before his baptism have less evidence than any of the others, because the scene to which they are referred lies at a distance from the island, in which it appears that the author of the Acts wrote his account ; they have not therefore the insular tradition in their favour. In order to account for their appearance in the Acts of the Saint, it is not necessary to accuse the

author of dishonesty. In an age of faith, when miracles were not considered as proofs of a system which required no proof, but simply as instances of God's power working through His Saints, men were not critical about believing a little more or a little less. Again, there is no proof that the writers intended these stories to be believed at all. Many of them may have been merely *legends*, things worthy of being "read for example of life and instruction of manners."¹ Many a wild and grotesque tale about the triumphs of Saints and Angels over the powers of evil may have been told to the novices by an aged monk at recreation-time without being considered as an article of faith. Such stories were only meant to be symbols of the invisible, like the strange forms of devils which were sculptured about the Church. As for St. Helier's carrying his head in his hands, it may be observed that the writer only represents the story as a conjecture of the priest who attended on the Saint. And it may here be mentioned, that besides this of St. Helier, only three other instances have been found by us of similar legends, the well known story of St. Denys, that of St. Winifred, and that of St. Liverius, martyred by the Huns at Metz, A.D. 450, and mentioned in one Martyrology,² on the 25th of November. Of these four instances, that which is the best known, seems, though occurring in the Roman Breviary, to be tacitly or avowedly given up by most writers on the subject ; and all, except the instance of St. Winifred, which may perhaps be considered in another place, are introduced to account for the removal of the body of a Saint from the place of his martyrdom. If there were not also a want of evi-

¹ Sixth Article.

² V. Usuard. ed. Soller, p. 700.

dence for these stories, this alone would not of course authorize us to mistrust them, for none would presume to limit the power of Almighty God or His favours to His Saints. As however they are related by writers far distant from the time when the events are said to have occurred, it may be allowed to class them among mythic legends. Into this form threw itself the strong belief of those faithful ages in the Christian truth that the bodies of Saints, the temples of the Holy Ghost, are under the special keeping of God, and that these precious vessels are one day to be again alive, and to be glorified for ever with the saintly souls, which without them are not perfect. The bodies of Saints have without doubt been kept incorrupt, as though life was still in them, and the belief that they had sometimes by God's power moved as though they were alive, was only a step beyond that fact. Finally, it may be well to mention, that as late as the year 1460, Henry VI. granted a favour to the Prior of the Canons of St. Helier, on account of the miracles still wrought by his intercession on the rocky islet where he died.

A LEGEND OF ST. HELIER.

A great many hundred years ago, when Childebert was king of the Franks, there lived in the ancient town of Tongres, a nobleman named Sigebert. He was one of that race of blue-eyed and long-haired warriors, who had left their own cold forests in the north of Germany, to settle down in the rich plains which border on the Rhine. Though he was a nobleman, he was not created by letters patent like our dukes and earls, but he was the chief of one of the many tribes of his nation ; his pedigree, though it was not enrolled in a herald's office, went as far back as Odin, the northern hero. His lands were all won by his good sword, and by the devotion of his followers, who loved him well, for he was kind and gentle to them, though rough to his enemies. His wife was a noble lady of Bavarian race, called Leufgard, and very happy they were together, for she was a beautiful and loving woman, and ever submissive to her lord's will. One thing however was wanting to them : they had no child, and they at length despaired of ever having any. As a last resource, they applied to a holy man, who lived near them, called Cunibert. Now you must know that at that time the Franks were a half heathen, half Christian people. Clovis, their most powerful chieftain, had become a Christian, and having been crowned and anointed king, had established something like an organized kingdom, principally by the aid of the Church. Great numbers of his followers had become Christian ; but in this wholesale conversion, the fierce northern warriors still remained half pagan, and some of them

were not yet Christian even in name. Among these unhappily were Sigebert and his wife ; they applied to Cunibert rather as to a man who had power with God, than because they believed in our holy faith. Cunibert, who had long wished to convert the noble Germans, and had mourned over their perverseness, promised to pray for them, if they in return agreed to give him the child who should be born, that he might offer him up to God. They agreed to these terms, and in due time the prayers of the holy man were heard, and the lady bore a beautiful child. Before he was born, however, Cunibert had gone to the Holy Land to visit the tomb of our Lord, and he remained in the East for three years. On his return, he claimed the fulfilment of their engagement ; but the lady looked into the laughing eyes of her fair child, and could not find it in her heart to part with him. And Sigebert laughed aloud, and said that his son should be a warrior, and wield sword and spear, and ride on horseback, not sing psalms and swing censers ; he should be brought up in a palace, and wear golden bracelets, and long flowing hair upon his head, as did his forefathers, not go about with a shaven crown and be a poor man like Cunibert. Thus did they stumble at the offence of the cross, as the world has done from the first. Holy Mary went on her way to Bethlehem poorly clad ; she had on a peasant's garment, and the world swept by and did not know that she was the rich casket which contained the pearl of great price, which whosoever findeth will sell all that he hath to buy.

Cunibert went away in sorrow, and probably gave up all thoughts of ever winning that beautiful child to Christ. But our blessed Lord, who was once himself a little child, had not forgotten him. For seven years

of his life he continued the same Frankish boy ; his limbs were strong and active, and every body loved him when they saw him playing about on the green sward. But all on a sudden, and without any apparent cause, he seemed to wither away ; his strength forsook him, and he became pale and weak. One day as he was lying in pain on his mother's lap, he said, "O, give me back to that holy man, by whose prayers I was born, and to whom you promised me." His parents saw that they could not struggle with the will of God, and sent their son, lying on a litter, to Cunibert. When the little boy saw Christ's servant, he said, "O, holy man, by whose prayers I was born, have pity upon me, and pray to your God to heal me." Then Cunibert knelt down beside the child's bed, and God heard his prayers, and the racking pains left him and he became as well as ever. Then the holy man took him to live with him, and gave him the name of Helier, making him a catechumen or candidate for Christian baptism. Then the boy was happy, for Cunibert taught him his letters, and he was soon able to read the Psalter, and to accompany his master when he sang the hours in Church. Cunibert had nothing but his own barley bread to give him, and except on feast-days he ate but one meal a day ; but he liked this better than the good cheer to which he had been accustomed at the joyous warrior's banquet in his father's hall.

All this while Helier was unbaptized ; his spiritual guide said nothing to him about it, and Helier wondered. He however remained in quiet patience, trusting that God would bring him to the laver of regeneration in His own good time. What was Cunibert's reason we cannot tell : perhaps he wished further

to subdue the impatience of the Frankish blood which ran in the boy's veins, or, as may by and bye appear more likely, God had revealed to him what was His gracious will with respect to that child. What were the mysterious movements of God's grace on the soul of Helier, we who have enjoyed the inestimable privilege of having from the first been taken up into the kingdom of heaven, cannot of course understand. We can only see the outward life of his soul and look on in wonder ; for now that Holy Ghost, who of old moulded the spirits of the prophets, and made St. John the Baptist to be a dweller in the wilderness and a holy eremite, dealt graciously with this child of pagan parents and made him give up the world to live a hard and lonely life. He gave him favour with the poor of the earth, among whom he had taken his place. The wild German who was in process of settling down from the savage forayer into the boor who tilled the ground, the half-Christianized giant of the northern forest, was attracted by the sanctity of this holy child, who lived day and night in the courts of the Lord's house. They brought him their sick and their blind, and thought that there was virtue in the touch of his little hand, and by the grace of God he healed them. It might have been thought that the wonders thus wrought by the hand of his child would have melted Sigebert's heart ; but instead of seeing in all this the power of the cross, he thought upon the charms and mysterious rites of his northern forests, and his heart was hardened. Then his clansmen came to him and said, " Let us kill this wizard Cunibert, and get thee back thy child ;" and he yielded to them and bade them slay the holy man.

Now God was pleased to reveal to Cunibert what

was coming upon him, and in the morning after they had sung matins together, he told the boy that his death was at hand, and bade him fly away. The child wept and said, "And will you not baptize me, O my father?" Cunibert replied, "God wills that another hand should do that, O my son." And the boy was very sorry and sore loath to part from his spiritual guide, but too obedient to gainsay him. They remained together all day in the Church, and only parted when evening fell, and then each retired to his cell. Cunibert, when he was alone, began as usual in quietness and peace to sing psalms, and as he was singing the hundred and first psalm, the wicked men entered. They rushed fiercely up to him, and just as he had come to the words "*Quando venies ad me Domine*," he bowed his head and they smote him down, and immediately went away. Helier, hearing a noise, came out of his little cell and went to his master's chamber. He found him lying dead, bathed in blood, but his countenance was placid, and his finger was still upon the book, pointing to the blessed words which were upon his lips when his spirit passed away. Helier wept sore at the sight, and cried aloud, "Wonderful is God in His Saints; He will give strength and power unto His people: blessed be God." But he had no time to lose, for he knew that his kinsmen would not be long in coming to look for him; so he covered the body of his dear master as well as he could with earth, and then with a sad heart he rushed away.

It was the dead of night when he left the Church, and he knew not where to go, but he went trusting in God's guidance. He might have returned to his mother's arms, but he preferred the dreary wild which he was treading to the dangers of his father's palace.

For six days he wandered on and on through the depths of pathless forests, dreading all the while to hear his father's horsemen pursuing him. At length he saw a distant town lying before him, and he lifted up his hands to God and said, "Lead me in Thy way, and I will walk in Thy truth. Let my heart rejoice that it may fear Thy name. My God, save me from the hand of the sinner, and from the hand of mine evil father, who worketh against Thy law, for Thou art He on whom I wait." Having said this, he walked on, and found himself in the town of Terouenne. He was now almost spent with fatigue, and meeting a poor widow, he applied to her for help. She took him into her house and took care of him for two weeks. After this, he asked her to show him some lonely place, where he could serve God in quiet. She led him a little way out of the town, to St. Mary's Church. The house of God was the place to which he naturally turned. His dwelling was in the porch of the Church, and here he remained for five years, living as he had done with Cunibert. The rain and the wet formed deep pools about him, and his shoes were worn out, so that the sharp pebbles were often stained with his blood. But notwithstanding all these hardships, it never struck him that he could go elsewhere, for the only home that he had ever known was the Church, except indeed his father's palace, and that of course was out of the question. And the only guide whom he had known was Cunibert, and now that he was gone, he was ignorant where to look for another upon earth. So during these five long years, he waited patiently, trusting in God. When he wanted food he went to the widow's house, and there too he had a wooden pallet on which he stretched himself whenever he chose.

This way of life attracted the people of the place ; they saw in the youth one whom Christ had marked for His own by suffering, and who crucified his body for the Lord's sake. The sick and infirm learned to put faith in his prayers, and God was pleased to hear them, as He had done at Tongres, and healed them. At length, at the end of five years, an incident happened which more than ever raised his fame. The wife of a nobleman in the town of Terouenne, named Rotaldus, was by a dreadful accident the means of the death of her own child. The first impulse of the poor father was to rush to the Bishop of the place, and to implore him to go to Helier, and to command him to pray that the babe might return to life. Helier was filled with wonder when he saw the Bishop approach him, and still more when he heard his command ; but obedience was natural to him, and he followed in silence to the Church where the corpse of the little child lay stretched upon a bier. Then Helier bethought himself that this would be a sign whether the time was at hand when Christ would regenerate his soul in the holy waters of baptism. So he knelt down and lifted up his hands to heaven and said, "O God, in whose hand is all power, who didst raise the child on whom the door was closed, and the son of the widow of Nain when borne on the bier, I pray thee, that if it is Thy will that I be made a Christian, may it be Thy will also of Thy great goodness that this child be raised to life." And when he had done praying, the child began to move and to cry for his mother.

The night after this miracle, Christ appeared in a vision to Helier, and bade him go to Nanteuil, where a man named Marculfus would baptize him, and teach him what was to be his way of life. As soon as he arose in

the morning, Helier set about obeying this command. It was not without tears that he took leave of the good woman who had been as a mother to him for so long ; but as soon as this parting was over, his heart was glad, for he was on his way to be made a Christian. The devil, however, who is ever roaming through the world, seeking whom he may devour, made one last effort to tempt him as he had tempted our blessed Lord. At the end of a day's journey, when Helier found himself near the little river Canche, the devil met him in a bodily shape, and said to him, "Dear youth, when thou mightest be rolling in all manner of worldly wealth, why wilt thou roam about alone, rushing after a visionary poverty?" But Helier knew the tempter by his advice ; though he stood alone on the banks of the solitary stream, he did not fear him, and he pressed boldly on, saying, "Away with thee to that toil which was laid upon thee from the time that thou didst fall from heaven and lose the name of Lucifer." Then the devil vanished away, and Helier pursued his journey. He went on through the district of Ponthieu into Normandy, and found St. Marculfus at the Vaulxdunes, a range of low sandy hills along the sea-shore.³

The holy man whom God assigned to Helier in place of Cunibert, was one who was well able to enter into the simplicity and fervour of the youth. He was fighting

³ This place, Vallesdunæ, is thus described by Cænalis, de Re Gallica, 2. p. 4. *Ora illa maritima quam appellant Vallesdunæ in Oximensi agro Gulielmi nothi victoria adversus Widonem Burgundionum comites filium memorabilis.* In the Chronicle of Normandy it is said to be three leagues from Caen, v. *Receuil des Hist.* Tom. 11. p. 333, where also see a curious description of the place from the Roman du Rom.

hard to root up the paganism which still lingered about the diocese of Coutances. Having received a command from God to build a monastery, he one morning mounted his ass and journeyed up to Paris, where his sanctity awed the mind of the savage Frankish king Childebert, so that he came back to Coutances with a grant of land at Nanteuil. Here on the borders of that stormy sea, which was not so wild as the men whom he had to rule, he built his Abbey. He would sometimes retire into a lonely island off the coast, which still bears his name, to serve God in solitude ; still, however, he was always to be found on the mainland whenever the service of God called him thither. To him then Helier repaired, and on the day of our Lord's nativity, in the Church of St. Mary, his soul was washed in the healing waters of baptism. For this Helier had longed with a patient longing, day and night, and now that he was born anew to Christ, he rejoiced with an unfeigned joy. He knew that God could overstep the bounds which He has set to Himself, and by a special grace keep from sin the soul of the unbaptized, if he has the desire of baptism ; but he also knew that regeneration, the proper gift of the gospel, was only given through the channel of baptism. Nay, though his body had been endued with virtue so as to heal the sick, yet this was nothing to him, as long as his soul lacked that illumination which is given by water and the Spirit. As then Cornelius, though the external gifts of the Holy Ghost had fallen upon him, was baptized, so was Helier brought to the holy font after so many years of waiting.

For three months he remained with Marculfus, but he longed to be at work and to carry out the crucifixion by which he had been crucified with Christ. He

begged of his new spiritual guide to point him out some lonely spot, where he could remain serving Christ with prayers and spiritual songs day and night. Woods and caves there were in plenty, where he might take up his abode ; there was the old forest of Scissay, in the heart of which was still a pagan temple, where the savage people worshipped. But Marculfus sent him to live in a wilder spot than this. The Abbot of Nanteuil had so much to do on the mainland of the Cotentin, that he could not as yet take into the range of his labours the many islets which lie on that wild coast. The cluster now called the Channel Islands, was then a sort of legendary ground, a vague and shifting spot, on the verge of Christendom, and as yet untouched by the faith of Christ. Thither he sent Helier, and with him a priest named Romardus, to show the people of the islands what Christians were. They had not very far to sail from France to Jersey, for the islands were probably nearer to the mainland than they are now, such changes have the waves caused on the Norman coast. What is now St. Michael's bay, was then a large forest, and the people of Guernsey still have stories to tell about the time when their island and the little isle of Herm were one. The place to which they first came was Augia,⁴ for that is the

⁴ The author of the Acts of Helier calls the island Agna, which is an evident mistake for Augia, a word derived from the German *aue*, a meadow. There is another isle of Augia, in the lake of Constance, and the word forms part of the name of no less than eight monasteries in the diocese of Constance. The German names of these places are all compounds of *aw*, or *aue*, which is a proof of the etymology assigned to this name for Jersey. There are places in Normandy with nearly or entirely the same name, as Augia, le pays d'Auge, and the monastery of Augum or Eu, called also B. Maria Augensis.

name which the Franks gave to Jersey on account of its green meadows and well-watered valleys. Theirs was in all likelihood the first Christian foot which touched the ground of the island. It was the last stronghold of the Celts, where dwelt a thin remnant of the old race which the Franks had conquered. Here then in the old haunt of Druid rites, did Helier find himself, with the stone circles and the huge granite altars of a worn-out faith all around him.

And now how was he to set up the cross over these rude relics of an ancient world ? He began by bearing it in his own flesh ; he fasted and wept all day, and he sung psalms and kept his thoughts ever fixed on God and on all the wonders which Christ has wrought. No one who dwelt in king's houses, clad in soft raiment, could have hoped to win the hearts of the rough and simple feeders of cattle who dwelt on the island. It was the rude giant Christopher, says the legend, who bore the infant Jesus, with the globe and cross in his hand, across the swollen stream, and so by rough arts did Helier bring Christ over the fretful waves to these poor islanders. A common missionary might have preached to them for many a year in vain, but Helier certainly took no common way of teaching. He was to be the forerunner of the faith of Christ, and so, like John the Baptist, he lived a supernatural life. The place of his abode was as dreary as the wilderness on the banks of the Jordan. About the middle of what is now St. Aubin's bay, two huge rocks jut into the sea, divided from each other by a dark chasm, and from the island by a sort of causeway. At high tide, however, the water rushes through this chasm, and completely surrounds the rocks which are thus at certain times wholly cut off from the shore and from each other. On the

larger of these huge crags, may still be seen Helier's hermitage.⁵ It is a rough pile of stones, built on a ledge of the shelving rock, which itself forms one side and the floor of the building. On the side nearest the sea, the thick wall is pierced by an opening about as large as the narrow loophole of one of the many watch towers built on the headlands of the coast ; and through this, every wind that sweeps across the sea might whistle at will. In a corner of this dreary abode, there is a hole in the rock, now worn smooth, probably by the monks and pilgrims of after times, and here, as tradition says, did Helier stretch his limbs during the few hours which he gave to sleep. For this dreary place he gave up his father's palace ; and if any one is tempted to ask why he took all this trouble, I would bid him wait till the end of my story, and he will know.

The people of the island soon found out Helier ; it did not require a long train of thought to make out that he was a man of God ; and two cripples, one a paralytic, and the other a lame man, came to him, and by the help of our blessed Lord he healed them. The simple chronicler who has written the acts of our Saint, has by chance here put in a few words which mark the spot of the miracle. He says that those people healed by Helier left the mark of their footsteps on the rock ; now it happens that till a few years ago,

⁵ It is possible that the building which is now on the spot where Helier lived, was afterwards built by the monks, and this must be decided by a person learned in architecture. To a common observer it bears the marks of the highest antiquity, and is not at all unlike the very ancient chapel called the Pauline, in the island of Guernsey. At all events it would only make St. Helier's hermitage indefinitely more austere if even this rude building was wanting.

there were in a part of the island not far from his cell, some strange marks, like the print of feet upon a hard rock on the sea-shore. No one could tell whether they were cut out by the hand of man, or were rude basins worked out by the sea in a fantastic form. The poor people of the island in after times told another tale about these footsteps. They said that the blessed Virgin had once appeared there, and had left the mark of her feet upon the rock, and a small chapel was built upon the spot.⁶ Now it may be that these mysterious marks were neither left by the poor men whom Helier healed, nor yet by that holy Virgin; but still let us not despise the simple tales of the peasantry; there is very often some truth hidden beneath them. Thus in this case, we know that a long time after Helier's death, the people of the island still had stories to tell about his miracles, and loved to connect with him whatever appeared mysterious in their wild coast. Again the rough Celtic name⁷ of the man whom Helier healed, grating unmusically in the midst of a Norman legend, shows that the tale belonged to an earlier age; so that it is very likely that this story contains traces of a real miracle done by God through Helier's hand. No one need pity the poor peasants for their faith. He alone is to be pitied who thinks all truth fable and all fable truth, and thus mistakes the fantastic freaks of the tide of man's opinion for the truth itself, which is founded on that rock which bears the print of our Lord's ever-blessed footsteps.

⁶ The spot here meant is still called *Le Havre des Pas*. The rock and the ruins of the chapel have been lately blown up, to procure stone for the building of a fort.

⁷ *Ascretillus*.

Helier had lived three years on his barren rock, when at length Marculfus found time to come and visit Jersey. The object of Marculfus in coming to the island was most likely to build a monastery there ; for that had been found to be the only way of spreading light among the benighted people. Many an idol had still to be cut down by the zealous hand of a Saint ; Brittany and the islands on its coast were especially a debatable ground between Christianity and heathenism. The lives of the Saints of the period are full of stories which show the belief that evil beings still dwelt in the wild caves and forests of the country. Strange tales of wonderful voyages and of dragons destroyed by holy men are mingled with the Acts of the Saints.⁸ And indeed we cannot tell how great may have been the power of the Evil one on his own ground in a heathen country, where he and his angels were worshipped, nor how much strength the Saints put forth to drive him out. At all events, it was found that the only way to root idolatry out of the hearts of the people, was to advance into the devil's ground and to plant an abbey in that forest where was an idol's temple. Many a monastery has become the head quarters of religion in the spot which was the seat of Druids ; and many a hermit has won the veneration of the people by dwelling alone in some place which the fisherman and the peasant scarce durst approach, because it was be-

⁸ V. Acts of S. S. Sampson and Maclovius. In the former of these traces are found of something very like second sight, and of an antagonist power granted to a Christian Abbot, v. p. 166 and 177. Acta S. S. Ben. vol. 1. Stories seem to have connected St. Maclovius with Brendan's famous voyage ; but little credit however is given to them by the author of the Acts. Ibid, p. 218.

lieved to be haunted. This was visibly setting up the cross of Christ in triumph above the powers of wickedness. Often again the monastery arose around the hut of the hermit, whose holiness had drawn disciples around him. Again about this time St. Maur and his Benedictines arrived in France,⁹ and were favoured by Childebert, the same king who had granted Nanteuil to St. Marculfus. All this had raised high the monastic order in France, and makes it the more likely that St. Marculfus meant Helier to be the Abbot of a monastery which was to be the centre of religion in the Channel Islands. He looked upon himself as a missionary going to evangelize men of Celtic race ; when he took leave of his weeping brethren at Nanteuil, he said, "Brethren, mourn not for me, I pray you, for if I live I will not delay to return to you ; but I must preach the word of God in other places, for therefore am I sent." Accompanied then by one of his priests, he went, say his Acts, "into the region of the Britons." Helier received him with joy. St. Marculfus, however, hardly knew his young disciple, so much was his countenance changed by his devotional exercises and his hard life. The cold west wind blows all across the Atlantic, often in boisterous weather forcing the waves with a peculiar hollow sound upon the rocky headlands, and through the narrow entrances of the many bays around the island ; and it had done sad havoc with Helier's slender form and weather-beaten face. Long did they speak together in the little hermitage on the rock. The same old chronicler has told us what they spoke about ; they related what God's grace had done for them, and how He had given them power to foil the devil, who had

⁹ St. Maur came into France about 543.

tried to hurt their souls in this lonely place. All their joy was in the triumph of the cross and in the advance of Christ's kingdom.

St. Marculfus however could not remain long with him ; very little is known about his labours in the island and how far he succeeded in converting them. He however probably did not do much, for some cause which is not on record soon took him back to the mainland. A few days however before he went, God enabled him by his prayers to do a signal service to the poor islanders. Romardus was one day looking forth on the wide waste of waters which surround the island, and I dare say his eyes often turned to the mainland of France, where the diocese of Coutances lay in the distance, and where now a sharp eye may faintly trace the outline of the western towers of its cathedral. He suddenly saw a vessel veering round one of the headlands which stretch into the sea, and soon after there appeared a whole fleet scudding before the wind and entering, their white sails filled with the breeze, into the broad bay of St. Aubin's. On a nearer approach he could see the fatal standard of the White Horse, which betokened a Saxon fleet. It was very likely a part of the band of adventurers which was at that time spreading havoc on the shore of England. Romardus was dreadfully alarmed at the sight ; the poor people of the island were far too few in number to resist this armed host. They were a peaceful race, engaged in feeding the cattle for which the verdant valleys of the island were famous, and utterly unable to fight these iron Saxons.¹ Romardus went to Helier's cell, and they both together went to Marculfus. He bade them

¹ Divites pecoribus et aliis opibus.

be of good cheer, and all three threw themselves upon their knees on the top of the bare crag, and prayed to God to turn away these blood-thirsty heathens from the islands which were ready to receive the cross. The prayer of a righteous man is very strong. Some of the Saxon keels had already touched the strand, when there gathered a black cloud in the heavens, and the sea began to boil up fearfully, as any one who has seen the white waves dashing on that coast can well believe. In a short time the wrath of God had scattered the heathen fleet ; some of the vessels were dashed against each other ; others were swallowed up by the waves, or broken in pieces against the many rocks which encircle that iron-bound coast. The men of the island had crowded up to St. Marculfus to beg of him to pray to his God for them ; they were but thirty men in number,² but the Saint, pointing to the few Saxons who had landed, made the sign of the cross over these trembling islanders, and bade them be of good cheer, for God had given these savage plunderers into their hands. And so it fell out, for the Saxons, dismayed by the death or dispersion of their companions, and by the unexpected resistance, became an easy prey. Three days after this happened, Marculfus crossed over to France, taking Romardus with him, but still leaving one of his disciples in the island to be Helier's spiritual guide. He probably meant to return as soon as affairs on the continent would allow him. St. Marculfus how-

² The old Acts of St. Marculfus say : *fertur etiam-que a multis asseritur nonplus triginta incolarum temporibus illis in hac insula demorari.* As he is talking of the men capable of bearing arms, this would make about thirty families. The same number is repeated in the later Acts, and in St. Helier's Life, except that the latter says, *triginta promiscui sexus.*

ever never again saw Helier in the flesh, though they probably finished their earthly pilgrimage about the same time ;³ it was God's will that a man of another race should found the first monastery in the Channel Islands, and the Abbot of Nanteuil was never again able to visit Jersey.⁴

For twelve long years after his spiritual father had left him did Helier dwell on his barren rock. His scanty history does not tell us expressly what he did, nor whether he with his companion converted the islanders to the Christian faith. His life is hid with Christ in God. We are however told minutely how at last he fell asleep, after his short but toilsome life. One night when he was resting on his hard couch, our blessed Lord for whom he had given up all things, appeared to him in a vision, and smiling upon him, said, "Come to me, my beloved one ; three days hence, thou shalt depart from this world with the adornment of thine own blood." In the morning his spiritual guide came to him, as he always did at the hour when the sea then,⁵ as now, left bare the causeway between the land and the rock where he dwelt. Helier then related to him the vision which he had seen to his great grief, for he at once saw that the end of his young disciple was near. On the third

³ St. Marculfus was ordained priest at thirty, and after this had time to found an abbey, and evangelize a district, before St. Helier knew him. Their acquaintance had lasted fifteen years when St. Helier died. Their deaths could not therefore have been much apart, and are generally placed about 558.

⁴ The Acts of St. Marculfus mention that he converted many of the inhabitants of the island ; as however he appears to have remained but a short time in the island, it seems likely that Helier and the person whom his Acts call his *pædagogus*, and who was probably a priest, really made these converts.

⁵ Diluculo, recedente mari.

day Helier arose from his bed of rock, and looked out upon the sea. A strong south-west wind was blowing, and he saw that the sea was covered with ships running before the breeze into the bay of St. Aubin's. He knew that a fleet of Saxons was at hand, and his heart told him that this was the summons of his Lord, and that from these ruthless haters of Christianity he was to meet his death. He went back into his cell that he might die, as he had lived, in prayer. For some time his abode remained unknown, so like was it in colour to the grey cliff on which it was built. At last the cry or the flight of the sea-birds who shared the rock with Helier, called the attention of the pagans to the place, and they descried the cell perched on the edge and overhanging the tossing waves below. They were not long in climbing the cliff, and entering his rude abode. Neither silver nor gold was there to call forth their thirst for spoil, and they gazed for some time upon him, thinking him to be some poor madman. At length the truth probably flashed across the mind of one of these savages, that he was a Christian hermit, for he rushed up to him and cut off his head with his sword, and Helier immediately gave up his soul into the hands of his Lord, who had summoned him to appear before Him to receive the crown of martyrdom. Next morning his spiritual guide came down to the sea shore to cross over to the hermitage ; when however he came down to the beach, he saw lying on the sand the body of his young disciple. He did not know how it came there ; the tide might have floated it across the narrow channel between the hermitage rock and the mainland. But the head was resting so tranquilly on the breast between the two hands, and its features still smiling so sweetly, that he thought that God, to preserve the

body of the Saint from infidel hands, had endued the limbs with life to bear the head across to the shore. Bitterly did the master weep over the scholar ; he called him aloud by the name of father, well knowing that he had gained more from Helier than Helier from him. He feared much that his precious body should after all become the prey of the barbarians, and he bore it in his arms into a little vessel which was lying near. He laid his beloved burden upon the deck, and sat down near it, watching it as a mother would do her child. At length, however, exhausted with grief and anxiety, he fell asleep. How long he slept he knew not ; but when he awoke, he found himself on a coast which he had never seen. The vessel was swiftly gliding into a harbour, and men and women were standing on the shore, with their eyes fixed upon this strange sight, which they took for a phantom, a vessel driving on without sail or helmsman, its whole crew a sleeping man and a headless body. An invisible hand had unmoored the vessel, and angels had guided it through rapid current and past bristling rocks ; and it swam on alone over the surface of the sea, till it came safely to the harbour where the Saint was to rest. And when the Bishop of the place heard the story, he came down to the shore in his pontifical garments, and with incense and chaunting they bore the body in procession to the Church.⁶

But however this be, let us adore the wonderful ways of Christ our God, who snatched this brand from the burning to which by the wickedness of his parents

⁶ The Acts of St. Helier are so confused, that it is impossible to make out what is the place here meant. The abbey of Beaubee, in Normandy, possessed some of the relics of St. Helier.

he seemed to be born. He in His great goodness bade this beautiful flower spring from a rude stock, and spread the sweet odour of His name in these distant isles. He brought this son of a Frankish chieftain out of his father's palace all across France, to die at the hands of men of his race, in an attempt to teach His faith to the poor remnant of the Celtic race in this lonely island. Vague and dim is the Christianity of this cluster of isles in those early times, when it is uncertain whether they belonged to Dol or to Coutances.⁷ But St. Helier is the first Christian on record

⁷ It is certain that in Norman times they were in the see of Coutances, and this in itself makes it probable that they were always a part of that diocese, for political changes do not seem to have affected the state of dioceses marked out by the Church, except by the consent of the Church. For instance, the parishes of St. Sampson, of Rupes, and Palus Warnerii, were always peculiars of the Bishop of Dol, though situated in the diocese of Rouen, because they had once belonged to St. Sampson's Abbey of Pentale, and that, though the Abbey itself was destroyed by the Normans.—Gall. Christ. Tom. xi. 120. Again, the Channel Islands themselves were never regularly transferred to an English diocese, though the see of Coutances was lost to the kings of England. A papal bull allowed ships to go freely to the islands in war time, apparently for the very purpose of allowing the Bishop of Coutances to cross over when he pleased. If then the islands had ever been in the diocese of Dol, it seems likely that they would never have been transferred. The only argument on the other side is, that Baldricus, Archbishop of Dol, asserts that these islands were given to St. Sampson, by king Childebert. It may, however, be asked, whether an Archbishop of Dol in the twelfth century is very good authority for an event of the sixth, especially, it may be added, at the height of the dispute between Dol and Tours. Perhaps the most likely account is, that in the stormy times of the Franks, the islands never strictly formed part of any diocese; it is not on record that St. Sampson made a permanent establishment in

who strove to bend the stubbornness of the British race, and to turn them from the worship of the fountain and the rock to the faith of Christ. How many were converted by him we cannot tell, but at all events it was from him that they first gathered their ideas of the Christian faith. His fasts and his prayers and his innocent blood rose up before the Lord in behalf of all these islands. In after times, things were much changed in this little cluster of isles; they were no longer the same lonely spots as when Jersey had but thirty men who could bear arms, and Guernsey was a sacred island of Druids. In the many wars which the men of Brittany waged against each other or their neighbours, the isles were useful retreats for those of Celtic race. Dukes of Brittany, Frankish counts, and native lords appear amongst them; and a Neustrian Abbot^s came thither as an envoy from Charlemagne. Rugged and stubborn was the Breton race, and loose was its allegiance to France, whether a long-haired Frank or a Carlovingian reigned at Paris. They could hardly bow before the awful majesty of Charlemagne, and the feeble princes of his race only calmed them by opposing them as a barrier to the Normans. In these stormy times of Brittany, the islands were homes to their brethren on the continent, and Saints of different race from Helier came there, so that they seemed destined to be torn from Coutances, the see which had sent him forth. About the very time when St. Marculfus died, St. Sampson came to Jersey with his cousin

them, though he certainly preached as a missionary in at least one of them, apparently Alderney, and probably in more, v. Act. S. S. Ben. Tom. 1. p. 184; and St. Maglorius had resigned his bishoprick when he crossed over to Jersey.

^s V. Neustria Pia. p. 155.

Judaël, a prince of British blood. Shortly after came St. Maglorius, who healed the Frankish count Loyesco of his leprosy, and to him was given half the island, rich in woodlands and in fisheries. Here he built a fair Abbey, where dwelt sixty monks ; in his day the faith of Christ sunk deep into the minds of the islanders, for the poor fishermen who in their frail barks had to wrestle with that stormy sea, loved him well, and willingly brought their fish to the Abbey, whose vassals they were. Long afterwards they told how St. Maglorius was kind to them, so that when one of them was drowned, the Saint wept sore, and vowed a vow never to eat fish again ; and when evening came, he with all the monks went down to the shore chaunting litanies ; then he threw himself upon the sandy beach, and God heard his prayer, and was pleased to restore the dead man to life. In Guernsey too,⁹ the Saint healed the daughter of the native chieftain, and a field there, where once stood a chapel of which he was the patron, is still called after his name. All this seemed to show that another race than that of Helier was to

⁹ Bissargia insula eidem Sargiæ vicina, dives opum atque frugum, a quodam viro nobili, qui vocabatur Nivo, jure hæreditario tenebatur. Act. S. S. Ben. Sæc. l. vita St. Maglorii 29. The author goes on to speak of the numerous ploughs and vessels of the island, which description agrees much better with Guernsey than with the far smaller island of Sark. A learned friend in the Channel Islands, to whom these pages are much indebted, has suggested that Bissargia or Ve-sargia, is a Celtic diminutive, implying a larger Sargia. That the Sargia of the Acts is Jersey, is proved from its being called Javarsiacum, v. Ann. Ben. ii. 655. Guernsey, as being the smaller island, might therefore be called Bissargia. It is, however, very probable that the names of these small islands may have been confounded in those early times.

possess the Channel Islands ; many of the numberless clear fountains in the islands are still called after Breton Saints, and many of the little chapels which once studded the green valleys which run up and down through the whole country, were dedicated to those favourite patrons of the spot. The islands, with the entire Cotentin, were formally given up to Brittany when Charles the Bold gave to Salomon, a Celtic prince, the golden circlet of a king. But after being bandied about from Frank to Celt, the isles were finally gained by William, second duke of Normandy, whose long sword was used to settling accounts between Brittany and France. Then came the time when churches and chapels were dedicated in the names of St. Mary and St. George, instead of St. Sampson and St. Anne, the patron saints of Brittany. Then was Guernsey really the Holy Isle, when St. Michael's Abbey arose on the hillock where the huge granite altar of the Druids still remains to show how the blessed Archangel has triumphed over Satan ; and there also in times of Norman rule was built the nunnery of St. Mary of Lihou, in passing whose islet even now French vessels veil their topmast, though only the ruins exist. Then too it becomes clearer that through all these changes the name of St. Helier had not been forgotten. The Church of Coutances, which on the 16th of July celebrates the feast of the youthful martyr, was now without doubt the see to which the Channel Islands belonged. Even when the Celtic names lingered only in the lonely places of nature, and the Norman manors of St. Ouen, Anneville, and Saumarez, showed that the soil was possessed by lords of a different race, still St. Helier was remembered. A monastery was founded afterwards by William Fitz-Hamon, a Norman nobleman,

on the fellow rock to that on which he lived, where Elizabeth castle now stands ; and the rude steps which lead to his hermitage are even now to be seen worn by the steps of pilgrims in former times. There now appear faint marks on the wall, as if the monks of St. Helier had done their best to adorn it with frescoes, and to turn it into a small chapel by raising an altar in it. Well might they be grateful to him, for he sanctified the island with his blood. Not only Jersey, but the whole of the little group of islands was benefitted by him, for he first, as far as records tell us, crossed, in the character of a servant of Christ, the stormy sea which divides them from the mainland ; and the Abbot of St. Michael, when every third year he bore the Holy Sacrament, on Corpus Christi-day, through a great part of Guernsey, might bless the memory of Helier, whose blood had first made Christ known to these lonely islands. Even now many a peasant in the two largest islands of the Norman cluster, bears the name of the Saint, though he most probably has forgotten him to whom in great part he owes it that he is a Christian.

HISTORY OF

St. Herbert,

HERMIT ON DERWENTWATER.

A. D. 687.

It is not to be expected that much information should remain to us respecting one whose aim when on earth had been to retire from the world and to be unknown. Such is the case of St. Herbert, a Priest and Confessor, who in the latter part of the seventh century led a solitary life on one of the islands of Derwentwater, which still bears his name.

He is known to us only through his connexion with St. Cuthbert, to whom he was long united by the ties of religious friendship ; and all the records which remain of his life are contained in the Histories of that Saint. One, a life supposed to be written by a contemporary monk of Lindisfarne : the others, by the venerable Bede ; first, a metrical history, principally of his miracles, in Latin hexameters, in which as we might expect, there is a poetical freedom in reporting the words of the Saints ; a later and more full and exact life, from which the narrative we are interested in, is repeated almost in the same words, in the account of St. Cuthbert, in the Ecclesiastical History, agreeing

also in substance, though more detailed and accurate than the relation of the same event by the earlier writer.

St. Herbert is described as a Priest, venerable for the goodness of his life and character ; and, whilst his friendship with St. Cuthbert of itself indicates his sanctity, he is even said by the biographers of that Saint, to have almost equalled him in holiness during life, and from the chastening of a long and painful illness, to have attained at death to an equal degree of fitness for future glory. Yet St. Cuthbert became the object of general veneration ; Herbert was almost unknown ; for the one was called to positions of responsibility and public exertion, and endued with powers and gifts fitting him for them ; the other, so far as we know, led a retired life, and was unendued with extraordinary gifts.

Of St. Herbert's earlier history we know nothing. Their friendship makes it probable that he had previously lived where he had had frequent opportunities of intercourse with St. Cuthbert ; in the monastery (we might have supposed, but for the absence of any record of him) of Melrose or Lindisfarne, in which, previous to his retirement to solitude, St. Cuthbert's life had been spent, and over which he had successively presided ; whilst the expressions of submission used to him by Herbert fall in with the idea that he had been under his authority.

It was, as the metrical life informs us, from the advice of his spiritual friend and guide that he retired to the cell on Derwentwater ; and that he had previously been in a religious society, is confirmed by the circumstance that hermits usually were persons who had spent some time in a monastery, and then, like

St. Cuthbert, sought a life which seemed to afford opportunity for a more uninterrupted exercise of devotion and meditation. Some of the most holy men, however, and the greatest fathers of the Church, gave the preference to the life of monks in community, and did not approve of the change to solitude, as depriving a man of the opportunity of forming and exercising the graces of the Christian character, and of benefiting others by his gifts and labours. But, on the other hand, St. Athanasius, one of the most sober and judicious of them, and St. Jerome, the most accomplished, wrote the Lives of the first hermits, St. Antony and St. Hilarion. Perhaps we may say rightly that the eremitical life can never be properly attempted without a special divine inspiration, calling a man to it ; and then it is not simply allowable, but a duty. Even then it has often been found expedient not to adopt it without the preparatory discipline of a religious society, to learn self-control, severe hardihood in bearing with privations, humility, submission, and affectionate forgetfulness of self. That such a training had been gone through by St. Herbert, seems implied in his retirement being the consequence of the advice of St. Cuthbert, whose own life had been one of so much active exertion for the good of others ; and in the humility and affectionate submission which appear so strongly to have marked his character.

The retreat selected by him was a place secured from sudden or careless interruption, at the northern extremity of an island lying nearly in the centre of the Lake, which is almost five miles long and one and a half in width, and closely surrounded by mountains. The island itself is somewhat less than five acres in extent, and apparently unproductive. The sound of

the waterfalls on shore may be heard from it, swelling soft or loud as borne upon the wind, and it is the very spot which would be chosen by one who wished from one station to study the whole circumference of the Lake and the hills around it. At the same time the low level of its position excludes from view the richer flat grounds which adjoin the Lake, leaving only the more wild and dreary portions of the scene.

It is often remarked that situations of great natural beauty were selected by those who adopted the solitary life ; as though the religious mind felt a sympathy with the beauty of the natural objects which surrounded it, as at all times it has delighted to raise up the forms of grace and sublimity in works of art. And yet it seems perhaps more in harmony with the ascetic life to suppose that, though not indifferent to those beauties and unconsciously influenced by them, and willing to speak of them to others, the solitary would rather in his own thoughts recur to the words which reminded him of the time when all these things would be destroyed ; and even when he most rejoiced in them, it would be as suggesting the new and more glorious world to which they would give place. "What need to tell," says St. Basil of his own hermitage, "of the exhalations from the earth, or the breezes from the river ? Another might admire the multitude of flowers and singing birds, but leisure I have none for such thoughts."

We shall, however, form an inadequate idea of the self-denial of St. Herbert, unless we call to mind the condition of the country to which he retired. It was then occupied by a part of the Cymry, the remains of the British tribes, and formed one of their petty kingdoms. They were indeed subject to the Saxons, but foreigners in language and habits, and separated by the

most bitter hostility. Each nation regarded the other as worse than heathen, and exercised the greatest cruelties towards them. Their Churches were not in communion, and their common faith was forgotten. The Britons in this country are said to have been ecclesiastically subject to St. Kentigern's see of Glasgow, but they seem now to have been in a very ignorant, irreligious, and almost barbarous condition. Nay, a portion of them in the wilds of Cumberland, were actually pagan. The Roman occupation of that district, being for the mere purpose of a Frontier against the Picts or Caledonians, had never opened a way for the general conversion and instruction of the inhabitants. Even the professed Christians seem to have mingled heathen customs and usages with their Christianity. It was for a wild country with such inhabitants, who would look on a Saxon as a natural enemy, that Herbert exchanged the society of his countrymen, and the intercourse and sympathy of those Religious Houses which were the seats of piety and brotherly love, and the peaceful reward of labour and study. From the difficulties and trials thus incurred, he gained a special right to the title of Confessor by which he is designated in the Martyrologies.

One tie however was retained, in a yearly meeting with St. Cuthbert, with whom he then conferred as to his religious state, communicating his failings and infirmities, and receiving directions and advice respecting his everlasting well-being. A similar yearly visit is said to have been made by St. Bega to St. Hilda ; and we seem to have a parallel in later times in the friendship of our own Hooker and Saravia, so beautifully described by Walton, who says they were supposed to be Confessors to each other. And such instances suggest the

means of a perfection of friendship among Christians which otherwise could not exist. An unreserved confidence being allowed, under circumstances so sacred as to preclude the danger of familiarly speaking of our faults, and producing the affectionate trust which arises from the thought that all our known wrong doings and failings have been confessed to one who yet loves us and sympathises with us. St. Cuthbert had a singular power of thus influencing others, as Bede states, in speaking of his preaching.

It was probably in the latter part of the year 686, that the last interview of these holy friends took place on earth. And this is the occasion of the mention of St. Herbert in Bede's history, as being an instance of the foreknowledge of the time of his death, vouchsafed to St. Cuthbert.

The Saint had now been more than a year Bishop of Lindisfarne, and was making a second visit to Carlisle, which, with the country fifteen miles round it, had been given him by Egfrid, king of Northumbria. His former visit had been abruptly terminated by the death of the king, and he now returned, at the request of the brethren of his monastery there, to ordain Priests, and to give the religious habit and his benediction to Ermenburga, the widow of Egfrid, who was retiring to the Religious Society at Carlisle, over which her sister presided.

Here, according to his yearly practice, St. Herbert met him, desiring, by his wholesome exhortations, to be more and more inflamed in his affection for heavenly objects. After prayer, as was their rule, whilst they were communing on spiritual subjects and (to adhere to the language of the venerable Bede) were mutually inebriating each other with draughts of heavenly life,

St. Cuthbert desiring (as the metrical Life relates) that that day, on which they had been mercifully allowed to meet again, should be spent in the delights of holy converse, said, among other things, "Remember at this time, my brother Herbert, to ask and say to me all you wish ; for after our parting now we shall not again see each other with the eyes of the flesh in this world ; for I know that the time of my departure is at hand, and that I must shortly put off this tabernacle."

On this Herbert, falling at his feet, with groans and tears, said, "For our Lord's sake, I beseech you not to leave me, but remember your most faithful companion, and entreat the mercy of Heaven, that we, who have together served Him on earth, may pass together to behold His grace and glory in the heavens. You know I have always studied to live according to your direction, and if from ignorance or infirmity I have in any point failed, I have taken pains to chastise and amend my fault according to the decision of your will."

The Bishop bent in prayer, and being immediately informed by the Spirit that his request was granted, said, "Rise up, my brother, and do not mourn, but rather rejoice greatly, for the mercy of Heaven has granted what we asked."

They separated,—St. Cuthbert to his See, which he shortly afterwards resigned, and retired for the few remaining months of his life to the cell in the island of Farne, which he inhabited before his consecration. Herbert to his island. The event verified the promise and prediction. After this separation, they never again saw each other with the eyes of the body, but on one and the same day, nay, at one and the same hour—on Wednesday, the twentieth of March, 687, their spirits departing from the body, were immediately united in

the blessed vision of each other, and by the ministry of angels translated together to the kingdom of Heaven. Herbert, however, as Bede relates, was prepared by long previous illness, from an appointment, we may suppose, of Divine mercy, that in whatever degree he fell short of the merits of the blessed Cuthbert, this might be supplied by the chastening pains of lengthened sickness ; so that equalling the grace of him who had interceded for him, they might, as they had at one and the same time departed from the body, be fitted to be received into one undistinguished dwelling of everlasting bliss.

Seven centuries had almost passed away, and the remembrance of at least this event of St. Herbert's life was lost in the country where he had died : for he was a stranger, and under the alternate dominion of England and Scotland, the people had changed their language and habits, and were still in a poor and illiterate condition, when, A.D. 1374, the then Bishop of Carlisle, Thomas de Appleby, issued a mandate for the yearly commemoration of this event.

He states that in reading sacred books he had met with this narrative in Bede's History, and, conceiving that few if any were acquainted with it, "In order that men might not be ignorant of what the Lord had vouchsafed to reveal for the glory of His Saints," he appointed that on the anniversary of their death, the Vicar of Crosthwaite, the parish in which the Lake lies, should proceed to St. Herbert's Isle, and there celebrate with full chaunting the Mass of St. Cuthbert ; adding an Indulgence of forty days to all who should on that day repair thither for devotion in honour of St. Cuthbert, and in remembrance of Herbert. "What a happy holyday must that have been for all these vales !"

says a gifted writer lately taken from us ; “and how joyous on a fine spring day must the Lake have appeared with boats and banners from every chapelry !.... and how must the Chapel have adorned that little isle, giving a human and religious character to the solitude !”¹

The remains of a building are still visible among the wood with which the island is covered, “making the island,” adds Southey, “mere wilderness as it has become, more melancholy.” Hutchinson, the Historian of Cumberland, describes it in his time, fifty years ago, as appearing to consist of two apartments, the outer one about twenty-two feet by sixteen, which probably had been the chapel ; the other, of narrower dimensions, the cell. Of this smaller room the traces are almost lost : the walls of the other remain to the height of about three feet from the ground, built in the simple way of the country, of unwrought slaty stones and mortar ; heaps of stones from the building are lying around, and all are now overgrown with ivy, moss, and brambles, and clasped by the roots of trees which have grown upon them.

It is in a state befitting the simplicity and unassuming character of so meek a Saint, who wished to be withdrawn from public notice, and to be little thought of, and whose wishes were fulfilled after death, as in life. His name would have been unreported in history, except to show the greatness of the revelations made to his friend. It was in honour of St. Cuthbert that the mass was said in the chapel of his isle, and the very document which appoints it abstains from giving him the title of Saint, which is uniformly added to

¹ Southey's Colloquies, vol. ii. p. 35.

the name of Cuthbert :• and Herbert is remembered that St. Cuthbert may be honoured.

His name was added to the Martyrology of Usuardus, in Greven's edition, A.D. 1516 to 1521. It is given by Canisius in the German Martyrology, and by Ferrarius in his General Catalogue—following an English Martyrology.

Since in this age we cannot join the yearly pageant on his island, we will keep memory of him in the words of a poet, who is his neighbour, and who has written this inscription for the spot where was his hermitage :—

If thou in the dear love of some one Friend
Hast been so happy that thou knowest what thoughts
Will sometimes in the Happiness of Love
Make the heart sink, then wilt thou reverence
This quiet spot: and, Stranger! not unmoved
Wilt thou behold this shapeless heap of stones,
The desolate ruins of St. Herbert's cell.
Here stood his threshold; here was spread the roof
That sheltered him, a self-secluded Man,
After long exercise in social cares
And offices humane, intent to adore
The Deity, with undistracted mind,
And meditate on everlasting things
In utter solitude.—But he had left
A Fellow-labourer, whom the good Man loved
As his own soul. And, when with eye upraised
To heaven he knelt before the crucifix,
While o'er the Lake the cataract of Lodore
Pealed to his orisons, and when he paced
Along the beach of this small isle and thought
Of his Companion, he would pray that both

(Now that their earthly duties were fulfilled)
Might die in the same moment. Nor in vain
So prayed he :—as our Chronicles report,
Though here the Hermit numbered his last day,
Far from St. Cuthbert, his beloved Friend,
Those holy Men both died in the same hour.²

² Wordsworth's Poems, i. 299. ed. 1832.

HISTORY OF

St. Edelwald,

HERMIT AT FARNE,

A. D. 700.

THERE is a small island off the coast of Northumberland, by name Farne, seven miles to the south of the famous Holy Island, or Lindisfarne, and at the distance of two miles from the mainland. It is encompassed by a girdle of rocks, and once contained in it a mound of a circular form, in which there lay a spot of ground about seventy feet across, and to which St. Bede, in a passage presently to be quoted, gives the name of "heights," and Camden that of "fortress." Here St. Cuthbert lived a solitary life between his sojourn in the monastery, and his elevation to the see, of Lindisfarne; hither had he come to die; here, according to some accounts, he was originally buried. We are accustomed to consider a hermitage as a rural retreat in a wood, or beside a stream; a wild pretty spot, where the flowers fill the air with sweetness, and the birds with melody. So it often was; and hard indeed it should not be so. Hermits have privations enough without being cut off from the sight of God's own world, the type of glories unseen. However, otherwise thought St. Cuthbert: accordingly he so contrived the wall which circled round his inclosure, as to see nothing

out of doors, but the blue sky or the heavy clouds over his head.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage ;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for a hermitage.

Such was the sentiment of a soldier of this world ; the great combatants for the next have fulfilled it more literally as well as more religiously. Edelwald succeeded Cuthbert in this uninviting abode. He had been for many years a monk of Ripon, where St. Wilfred had founded a religious house, and afterwards was buried. Felgeld succeeded Edelwald, and was an old man of seventy in Bede's time, who perhaps on his information has recorded the following anecdote of the Saint in his metrical account of St. Cuthbert's miracles. After mentioning St. Cuthbert and Felgeld, he proceeds :—

Between these comrades dear,
Zealous and true as they,
Thou, prudent Ethelwald, didst bear,
In that high home the sway.

A man, who ne'er, 'tis said,
Would of his graces tell,
Or with what arms he triumphed
Over the Dragon fell.

So down to us hath come
A memorable word,
Which in unguarded season from
His blessed lips was heard.

It chanced that as the Saint
Drank in with faithful ear
Of Angel tones the whispers faint,
Thus spoke a brother dear :

“ O why so many a pause
Thwarting thy words’ full stream,
Till her dark line Oblivion draws
Across the broken theme ?”

He answered, “ Till thou seal
To sounds of earth thine ear,
Sweet friend, be sure thou ne’er shalt feel
Angelic voices near.”

But then the Hermit blest
A sudden change came o’er ;
He shudders, sobs, and smites his breast,
Is mute, then speaks once more.

“ O by the Name Most High,
What I have now let fall,
Hush, till I lay me down to die,
And go the way of all !”

Thus did a Saint in fear
His gifts celestial hide ;
Thus did an Angel standing near
Proclaim them far and wide.

Bede adds that in this respect Edelwald presented a remarkable contrast to St. Cuthbert ; who when commemorating the trials of Christians in former ages, was also in the habit of stating to others the sufferings and

graces wrought in himself by the mercy of Christ ;¹ “thus,” he observes, “the One Spirit adorned the two men with distinct gifts, and led them on to one kingdom by a different path.”

St. Cuthbert’s hermitage, though sufficiently well contrived to keep out the view of the sea and rocks, and of the cliffs of the neighbouring land, was not equally impervious to wind and water, which are of a ruder nature, and intrude themselves into places where the refined sense of sight and its delicate visions cannot enter. The planks of his cottage parted, and let in the discomforts of the external world without its compensations. The occurrence which grew out of this circumstance brings together the three successive inmates of the place, Cuthbert, Edelwald, and Felgeld, in a very sacred way ; and as it comes to us on good evidence, viz. the report of Bede from the mouth both of Felgeld, and of a common friend of Felgeld and himself, it shall here be given as he has recorded it.²

“Nor do I think,” says Venerable Bede, “I ought to omit the heavenly miracle which the Divine mercy showed by means of the ruins of the holy oratory, in which the venerable father went through his solitary warfare in the service of the Lord. Whether it was effected by the merits of the same blessed father Cuthbert, or his successor Ethelwald, a man equally devoted to the Lord, the Searcher of the heart knows best. There is no reason why it may not be attributed to either of the two, in conjunction with the faith of the

¹ At pia Cuthbertus memorans sæpe acta priorum
Ætheriâ sub laude, sui quoque Christus agonis
Ut fuerat socius, suerat subnectere paucis.

² In vit. St. Cuthb. In the extracts which follow, Dr. Giles’s translation is used with some trifling variations.

most holy father Felgeld ; through whom and in whom the miraculous cure, which I mentioned, was effected. He was the third person who became tenant of the same place and its spiritual warfare, and, at present more than seventy years old, is awaiting the end of this life, in expectation of the heavenly one.

“ When therefore God’s servant Cuthbert had been translated to the heavenly kingdom, and Ethelwald had commenced his occupation of the same island and monastery, after many years spent in conversation with the monks, he gradually aspired to the rank of anchoritic perfection. The walls of the aforesaid oratory, being composed of planks somewhat carelessly put together, had become loose and tottering by age, and, as the planks separated from one another, an opening was afforded to the weather. The venerable man, whose aim was rather the splendour of the heavenly than of an earthly mansion, having taken hay, or clay, or whatever he could get, had filled up the crevices, that he might not be disturbed from the earnestness of his prayers by the daily violence of the winds and storms. When Ethelwald entered and saw these contrivances, he begged the brethren who came thither to give him a calf’s skin, and fastened it with nails in the corner, where himself and his predecessor used to kneel or stand when they prayed, as a protection against the storm.

“ Twelve years after, he also ascended to the joys of the heavenly kingdom, and Felgeld became the third inhabitant of the place. It then seemed good to the right reverend Eadfrid, bishop of the Church of Lindisfarne, to restore from its foundation the time-worn oratory. This being done, many devout persons begged of Christ’s holy servant Felgeld, to give them a small portion of the relics of God’s servant Cuthbert, or of

Ethelwald, his successor. He accordingly determined to cut up the above-named calf's skin into pieces, and give a portion to each. But he first experienced its influence in his own person ; for his face was much deformed by a swelling and a red patch. The symptoms of this deformity had become manifest long before to the monks, whilst he was dwelling among them. But now that he was living alone, and bestowed less care on his person, whilst he practised still greater rigidities, and, like a prisoner, rarely enjoyed the sun or air, the malady increased, and his face became one large red swelling. Fearing, therefore, lest he should be obliged to abandon the solitary life and return to the monastery ; presuming in his faith, he trusted to heal himself by the aid of those holy men whose house he dwelt in, and whose holy life he sought to imitate ; for he steeped a piece of the skin above mentioned in water, and washed his face therewith ; whereupon, the swelling was immediately healed, and the cicatrice disappeared. This I was told, in the first instance, by a religious priest of the monastery of Jarrow, who said that he well knew Felgeld's face to have been in the deformed and diseased state which I have described, and that he saw it and felt it with his hand through the window after it was cured. Felgeld afterwards told me the same thing, confirming the report of the priest, and asserting that his face was ever afterwards free from the blemish during the many years that he passed in that place. This he ascribed to the agency of the Almighty grace, which both in this world heals many, and in the world to come will heal all the maladies of our minds and bodies, and, satisfying our desires after good things, will crown us for ever with its mercy and compassion."

It is better to use a contemporary's words than our

own, where the former are attainable ; for this reason, I make a second quotation from the same revered writer who has furnished the above narrative. The passage occurs in the beginning of the fifth book of the Ecclesiastical History :—

“The venerable Ethelwald,” he says, “who had received the priesthood in the monastery of Ripon, and had, by actions worthy of the same, sanctified his holy office, succeeded the man of God, Cuthbert, in the exercise of a solitary life, having practised the same before he was bishop, in the isle of Farne. For the certain demonstration of the life which he led, and his merit, I will relate one miracle of his, which was told me by one of these brothers for and on whom the same was wrought ; viz. Guthfrid, the venerable servant and priest of Christ, who afterwards, as abbot, presided over the brethren of the same church of Lindisfarne, in which he had been educated.

“‘I came,’ says he, ‘to the island of Farne, with two others of the brethren, to speak with the most reverend father, Ethelwald. Having been refreshed with his discourse, and taken his blessing, as we were returning home, on a sudden, when we were in the midst of the sea, the fair weather which was wafting us over was checked, and there ensued so great and dismal a tempest, that neither the sails nor oars were of any use to us, nor had we any thing to expect but death. After long struggling with the wind and waves to no effect, we looked behind us, to see whether it were practicable at least to recover the island from whence we came, but we found ourselves on all sides so enveloped in the storm, that there was no hope of escaping. But looking out as far as we could see, we observed, on the island of Farne, father Ethelwald, beloved of God, come out of his cavern to watch our

course ; for, hearing the noise of the storm and raging sea, he was come out to see what would become of us. When he beheld us in distress and despair, he bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in prayer for our life and safety ; upon which, the swelling sea was calmed, so that the storm ceased on all sides, and a fair wind attended us to the very shore. When we had landed, and had dragged upon the shore the small vessel that brought us, the storm, which had ceased a short time for our sake, immediately returned, and raged continually during the whole day ; so that it plainly appeared that the brief cessation of the storm had been granted from Heaven, at the request of the man of God, in order that we might escape.’ ”

Edelwald lived twelve years in his (to human eyes) dreary and forlorn abode ; dreary and forlorn, most assuredly, if he had no companions, no converse, no subjects of thought, besides those which the external world supplied to him. On his death, A. D. 699 or 700, his remains were taken to Lindisfarne, and buried by the side of his master, St. Cuthbert. Here they remained for near two centuries, when the ravages of the Danes in the neighbourhood frightened the holy household ; and Erdulf, Bishop, and Edred, Abbot of Lindisfarne, migrated with the bodies of their saints to the mainland. For a hundred years, the sacred relics of Oswald, Aidan, Cuthbert, Bede, Edbert, Edfrid, Ethelwold, and Edelwald, had no settled habitation ; but on the transference of the see from Lindisfarne to Durham, at the end of the tenth century, they were brought home again, under the shadow of the new Cathedral. There they remained till the changes of the sixteenth century, when, with the relics of Cuthbert, Bede, Aidan, and the rest, they disappeared.

A LEGEND OF

St. Bettelin,

HERMIT, AND PATRON OF STAFFORD,

TOWARDS A. D. 800.

BRIGHT luminaries in the heavens, which guide the traveller across the desert, are found, when viewed through a glass, to be double stars, not single, though each seems to be one. Suns which reign separately in their separate systems, far apart from each other, mingle their rays, as we see them, and blend their colours, and are called by one name. They are confused, yet they are used by the wayfaring man, who is not hurt by his mistake.

So it is with the beacon light which the seaman dimly discerns from afar. It has no definite outline, and occupies no distinct spot in the horizon ; it cannot be located amid the haze and gloom, but it gives him direction and confidence.

So is it with his landmarks by day ; one, two, three high trees are set on a hill,—nay, when close, we can count a dozen, yet in the distance they look like one, nor can we persuade ourselves that they are many. What matters it to those who are tossing at sea, so long as they remind them of the green home which they are approaching, and shape their course towards it ?

And so with the herbs of the field ; we call them simples, and we use them in medicine as such, and they do certainly put disease and pain to flight. Yet they are compounded of many elements, and some of these, not the whole plant, is the true restorative. Often we do not know that this is the case ; but, even when we do, we are not nearer to the knowledge of what the healing element is, or how it may be detached and used separately. We cannot extract the true virtue of the medicine from the impure drug, and we think it better to administer it in combination with other elements which may be useless, or even inconvenient, than to wait till we can duly analyze it.

And to take a more sacred instance, and more closely connected with the subject to which these remarks are tending. It has before now happened, that profane or fanatical violence has broken in upon the relics of the Saints, and scattered them over land and water, or mixed them with the dust of the earth, or even with the mouldering bones of common men, nay of heretics and sinners. Yet could it not destroy the virtue of the relics ; it did but disperse and conceal them. They did *more*, they were seen *less*. What says St. Basil about the Forty Martyrs, who were burned, and whose relics were cast into the river, in the Licinian persecution ? “ These are they who have taken occupation of this our country, as a chain of fortresses, and secure her against hostile invasion, not throwing themselves upon one point, but quartered upon many homes and the ornament of many places.”

And what the malice of foes has done to the bodies of the Saints, the inadvertence or ignorance of friends has too often done to their memories. Through the twilight of ages,—in the mist of popular credulity or enthu-

siasm,—amid the ambitious glare of modern lights, darkening what they would illustrate,—the stars of the firmament gleam feebly and fitfully ; and we see a something divine, yet we cannot say what it is : we cannot say what, or where, or how it is, without uttering a mistake. There is no room for the exercise of reason—we are in the region of faith. We must believe and act, where we cannot discriminate ; we must be content to take the history as sacred on the whole, and leave the verification of particulars, as unnecessary for devotion, and for criticism impossible.

This applies of course in no small degree to the miraculous incidents which occur in the history of the Saints. “ Since what is extraordinary,” says Bollandus, “ usually strikes the mind and is impressed on the memory in an especial way, it follows that writers about the Saints at times have been able to collect together nothing but their miracles, their virtues and other heavenly endowments being altogether forgotten ; and these miracles, often so exaggerated or deformed (as the way of men is) with various adjuncts and circumstances, that by some persons they are considered as nothing short of old women’s tales. Often the same miracles are given to various persons ; and though God’s unbounded goodness and power certainly need not refuse this Saint the same favour which He has already bestowed upon that, (for He applies the same chastisements and punishments to the sins of various persons) yet what happened to one has often in matter of fact been attributed to others, first by word of mouth, then in writing, through fault of the faculty of memory, which is but feeble and easily confused in the case of the many ; so that when inquiries are made about a Saint, they attribute to him what they remem-

ber to have heard at some time of another, especially since the mind is less retentive of names than of things. In this way, then, while various writers at one and the same time have gone by popular fame, because there were no other means of information, it has come to pass that a story has been introduced into the history of various Saints, which really belongs to one only, and to him perhaps not in the manner in which it is reported.

“Moreover it often happens that, without denying that a certain miracle may have occurred, yet the occasion and mode of its occurrence, as reported, may reasonably create a doubt whether this particular condescension, be it to man’s necessity or his desire, became the majesty of the Eternal. At the same time, since His goodness is wonderful, and we are not able to measure either the good things which He has prepared in heaven for the holy souls He loves, or the extent of His favours towards them on earth, such narratives are not to be rejected at hazard, though they seem to us incredible ; but rather to be reverently received, in that they profess to issue from that Fountain of Divine goodness, from which all our happiness must be derived. Suppose the very things were not done ; yet greater things might have been done, and have been done at other times. Beware then of denying them on the ground that they could not or ought not to have been done.”

These remarks apply among others to St. Bettelin, whose brief history is now to be given, though miracles are not its characteristic. He is the Patron of the town of Stafford, where he was once held in great honour ; but little certain is known of him, down to his very name. Various writers speak of Bet-

telin, Beccelin, Barthelm, Bertelin ; whether he owned all these at once, or whether but some of them, whether a portion of his history belongs to another person, or whether it is altogether fabulous, is not known. A life of him has come down to us, which is attributed to Alexander, a Prior of Canons Regular of St. Augustine, in the beginning of the thirteenth century ; but, though this Prior is well spoken of, little credit can be placed in the letter of its statements. Two other writers, Ingulphus and Felix, contain incidental mention of him, which is more trustworthy. We will put these notices together, under the guidance of the learned Suyskin, the Bollandist.

Bettelin was a disciple of St. Guthlake's, in the eighth century, and one of four who followed him in a hermit's life, in the island of Croyland, on the southern border of Lincolnshire. Cissa had been a pagan, of noble blood and great in the world ; but had left all to follow Christ and St. Guthlake, and succeeded him as Abbot. Till the Danes came, he lay in a high marble tomb, on the right of his spiritual father in the Abbey of Croyland. Egbert was more in St. Guthlake's confidence than any of his brethren ; he may have been his confessor. Tatwin had formerly been ferryman at the passage from the mainland to the Island. These, with Bettelin, who made the fourth, and came nearer the Saint's person than the rest, lived in separate cottages, close to Guthlake's oratory and under his guidance. All this we learn from Ingulphus, himself Abbot of Croyland, towards the end of the eleventh century.

Something of a painful and a guilty nature hangs over the first years of Bettelin ; legend and history agree in testifying as much as this. It is sometimes

said that no story is without foundation ; and at any rate this maxim is so often true as to make it fair in a particular case to be biassed *primâ facie* by such reports as are in circulation, though in details or in the letter they may be simply untrue. Thus an alleged fact against a man's character may be clearly disproved, and yet may be the spontaneous result of a general and prevalent impression founded on real facts. A statesman may in his day be popularly considered timid, when he is but prudent, or crafty, when he is but far-seeing ; or a monarch indulgent and paternal, though he is weak ; or a commander cruel and relentless, because he is stern in manner and determined in purpose. Here is a basis of truth, and a superstructure of error. A rumour is spread that political parties are breaking up, or that some illustrious person is estranged, or that some foreign influence is at work in high places. It may be formally and totally and truly contradicted ; it may be possible to explain it, to show how it originated, to refer it to the malice or the impertinence of this or that individual : and yet, though not a truth, it may be the shadow of a truth, unsubstantial, yet attached to it, the exponent of facts which discover themselves in the event. And in like manner the author of a marvellous Life may be proved to a demonstration to be an ignorant, credulous monk, or a literary or ecclesiastical gossip ; to be preaching to us his dreams, or to have saturated himself with popular absurdities ; he may be cross-examined, and made to contradict himself ; or his own story, as it stands, may be self-destructive ; and yet he may be the index of a hidden fact, and may symbolize a history to which he does not testify.

Now as to St. Bettelin ;—some cloud, it has been said, hung about his early years, which made him ever

after a penitent. A wild extravagant tale is recorded by Prior Alexander. We are told how that he was a king's son, and noble in person, and a good Catholic ; and how he shrunk from the licence of his father's court ; and how, to preserve his purity, he went over to Ireland, where he was received by a certain king or chieftain, who had a fair daughter ; and how in a strange land he found the temptation, and fell beneath the sin, which had frightened him from his own. He carried off his beautiful mistress to England, and sought for shelter and concealment in the woods. A wretched childbirth followed, and a tragical issue. While the father was seeking assistance, wolves devoured mother and infant. Bettelin remained a penitent in the wild ; till St. Guthlake, who was leaving Repton in Derbyshire, where he had entered into both clerical and monastic orders, took him with him to Croyland.

Such is the fable ; but it so happens that we seem to be able to produce in this instance the real facts of the case, of which it is but the symbol and record ; and though very different from the above, yet they are so far like it, as, alas ! to be even more criminal and dreadful than it. One Felix, a contemporary of St. Guthlake, wrote the life of the latter, shortly after his death, from the information of the Saint's disciples. Among these was Bettelin ; from him, who was at that time living with St. Guthlake on the most familiar terms, Felix learned the account of St. Guthlake's last days upon earth. Now Felix also tells us, in an earlier passage of the Saint's life, what the crime of Bettelin was ; and, as it would appear, from Bettelin's own mouth ; for there was no one else to tell him. If this be so, we have both a warrant for the authenticity of the story, and a great evidence of St. Bettelin's humility.

"There was a certain clerk," says Felix, "by name Beccelin, who offered himself for a servant to that great man St. Guthlake, and proposed to live to God holily, under his training. Into this person's heart the evil spirit entered, and began to puff him up with the pestilential conceits of vain glory ; and next, after he had thus seduced him, he proceeded to suggest to him to seize the deadly weapon, and to kill the master, under whose training he had begun to live to God, with the object, after taking him off, of succeeding to his place, and receiving the veneration of kings and princes. Accordingly, on a day when the aforementioned clerk had come, (as he was wont on the twentieth day,) to shave Guthlake, the man of God, afflicted by monstrous madness, and thirsting with exceeding desire for his blood, he made up his mind to murder him.

"Then the Saint of God, Guthlake, to whom the Lord did never fail to impart a prescience of things to come, having cognizance of the guilt of this new wickedness, began to question him. 'O, my Beccelin !' he said, 'why under this carnal breast hidest thou the old enemy ? Why not vomit forth these pestilential waters of bitter poison ? For I know that thou art deceived by the evil spirit ; wherefore confess the guilty meditations which our enemy, the accuser of the human race, has sown within you, and turn away from them.' On this, Beccelin, understanding that he had been seduced by the evil spirit, cast himself at holy Guthlake's feet, acknowledging his sin with tears, and humbly asking pardon. And the man of blessed memory not only forgave him the fault, but even promised him his aid in future troubles."

Thus speaks a contemporary author, who knew the

parties ; and it is certainly a remarkable passage in St. Guthlake's history, though that does not here concern us, that through life, up to his very death-bed, he was waited on in his bed-room by one who had all but turned the barber's razor into a weapon for his destruction. There is nothing to show that Bettelin did not continue to shave him, as before this occurrence. As to Bettelin himself, this part of his history reminds us of St. Brice, though the offence of the latter was of a far less serious die. Brice succeeded St. Martin in the see of Tours ; but in St. Martin's life-time, his proud boyish spirit showed itself in a scorn and ridicule of the Saint, which approached to the sin of the children who mocked Elisha.

If Bettelin was called to a stern penitence for this great sin, his master, who was to have been the victim of the sin, became a pattern for the penitence. "Recollecting," says Prior Alexander, "that the ancient fathers went about their deserts in sheep-skins and goat-skins, not in linen or cloth, but made use of goat-skins, raw and untanned, conforming themselves also to our first parents, who, on their rejection from the paradise of pleasure, received from God coats made of skins, and knowing that the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, they lived on barley bread and muddy water, with great abstinence." On St. Guthlake's death, Bettelin took the news, by the Saint's previous directions, to St. Bega, Guthlake's sister.

What happened to Bettelin after that event does not clearly appear. Ingulphus says that he remained and died in Croyland ; and he speaks of the marble tomb, which contained his relics, as well as Cissa's, near St. Cuthbert, in the Abbey of Croyland. And this is not incompatible altogether with the legend

which connects him with the town of Stafford, and which is as follows :—

Where the town now stands, the river Sow formed in those times an island which was called Bethney. Here St. Bettelin stationed himself for some years, and led a life so holy, that the place which profited by his miraculous gifts in his lifetime, grew into a town under his patronage after his death.

A wild, yet not unpleasing, fable is left us as a record of the Saint's history in this retreat. He had concealed his name when he took possession of the island ; and on his father's death, who was king of those parts, the usurper of St. Bettelin's throne determined, without knowing who he was, and from inbred hatred, as it appears, of religion, to eject him from his island hermitage. However, perhaps the romantic narrative which is now coming will run better in rhyme ; so we set off thus :—

St. Bettelin's wonted prayers are o'er
And his matins all are said,
Why kneeleth he still on his clay-cold floor
By the side of his iron bed ?
Ah ! well may he kneel to Christ in prayer,
For nought is around him but woe and fear ;
By to-morrow's sun the Saint must roam
Far from his cell and his long-lov'd home.
But who would drive this hermit good
From his islet home and his rough old wood ?
He is no man who hath sought the wild
In a wayward mood like a frolicsome child,
Who hath wander'd away from his mother's side
Deep in the merry greenwood to hide.
A golden crown he had cast away
To watch all night and to fast all day ;

He was of those whom the Lord doth drive
To the weary wild with devils to strive,
For the banner'd Cross must be every where,
Wherever the fiend doth make his lair,
And devils trembled and angels smil'd
When the hermit knelt in the weary wild ;
While the peasant arose his beads to tell
When the hermit rang his vesper bell.
But what hath the world to do with him,
That it grudgeth his home by the river's brim ?
Hath it not woods and streams at will ?
But so it hath been and it must be still,
Earth may be broad and its bosom wide,
But the world cannot rest with the cross by its side ;
And the king hath said with a scornful smile,
" The hermit hath chosen a fair green isle,
 By the river clasp'd around ;
And the turf is soft round his sweet chapelle,
 I warrant too he sleepeth well
 To that gushing river's sound ;
A Saint should not dwell in so fair a scene ;
And that river sweet with its islet green,
I swear by high heaven it shall be mine
In spite of this hermit St. Betteline."
And he bade the hermit prove his right
To his islet home in a deadly fight,
And if no champion can be found
He must quit by to-morrow this holy ground.
And who is there for Christ the Lord
To don his armour and draw his sword ?
And will not a knight put lance in rest
To do this hermit's poor behest ?
If for Christ they will not fight,
Foul shame on England's chivalry,
Their dancing plume and armour bright
Are but summer pageantry.

But let the wordlings pass along,
A Saint in prayer is wondrous strong.
“Lord,” he saith, “I do not grieve
This sweet place for aye to leave,
For if Thy love abide with me,
Barren cliff or flowery lea,
All is well that pleaseth Thee ;
But for Thy glory’s sake arise,
Cast down the strong, confound the wise.”
He rose from his knee, and then there stole
A low sweet voice to his inmost soul,—

“Man to Saints and Angels dear,
Christ in heaven hath heard thy prayer.”
Oh ! how that whisper deep and calm,
Dropp’d on his weary heart like balm.
Then St. Betteline rose, for the morning red
Through his lattic’d window was sweetly shed.
On the red tipp’d willow the dew-drop gloweth,
At his feet the happy river floweth,
And sweetly the lightly-passing breeze
Bendeth the wood anemones,
And all things seem’d to his heart to tell,
Thou shalt ring again thy chapel bell.
Then a man rode up to his lowly door,
One he had never seen before,
A low mean man, and his armour bright
Look’d all too large for his frame so slight ;
But his eye was clear and his voice was sweet,
And it made St. Betteline’s bosom beat
As he spoke, and thus his greeting ran,—

“In the name of the Holy Trinity,
Hermit, I come to fight for thee.”
“Now Christ bless thee, thou little man,”
’Twas thus St. Betteline said,
And he murmur’d, as meekly he bow’d his head,
“The brightest sword may be stain’d with rust,
The horse and his rider be flung to the dust,
But in Christ alone I put my trust.”

And then to the lists together they hied,
Where the king was seated in pomp and in pride,
And the courtiers cried with a merry shout,
“The hermit hath brought us a champion stout.”
But, hark ! through the forest a trumpet rang,
All harshly it rose with a dissonant clang ;
It had a wild and unearthly tone,
It seem’d by no Christian warrior blown,
And into the lists came a giant form
On a courser as black as a gathering storm ;
His vizor was clos’d, and no mortal sight
E’er saw the face of this wondrous wight,
But his red eye glow’d through that iron shroud,
As the lightning doth rend a midnight cloud ;
So sable a knight and courser, I ween,
In merry England never were seen ;
A paynim knight he seem’d to be,
From a Moorish country beyond the sea.
Then loud laugh’d the giant as on he came
With his armour bright and his eye of flame,
And he look’d on his rival full scornfully,
For he hardly came up to the giant’s knee ;
His vizor was up and it show’d to view
His fair long hair and his eye of blue ;
Instead of a war-horse he did bestride
A palfrey white which a girl might ride ;
But on his features there gleam’d the while
That nameless grace and unearthly smile,
Stern, yet as holy virgin’s faint,
Which good old monks have lov’d to paint
On the wan visage of a Soldier Saint.
And his trumpet tone rung loud and clear
With a thrilling sound on the ’wilder’d ear,
And each bad man in his inmost heart,
He knew not why, gave a sudden start.
The paynim had laugh’d with a scornful sound
As he look’d for an easy prey,

And he wheel'd his gallant courser round
And address'd him to the fray.
But what hath the dwarfish warrior done ?
He hath sat like a warrior carv'd in stone,
He mov'd not his head or his armed heel,
He mov'd not his hand to grasp the steel.
His long lance was pointing upwards still,
And the wind as it mov'd his banner at will
Show'd work'd on the folds an image good,
The spotless lamb and the holy rood.
But men say that his stature so dwarfish and small,
None could tell how, seem'd stately and tall,
And all at once on his foe he turn'd
A face that with hidden lustre burn'd ;
Ah ! what aileth thee now, thou sable knight ?
Hath that trumpet tone unnerv'd thee quite
That the spear doth shake in thy hand for fear ?
The courser is stopp'd in his wild career,
And the rider is rolling afar on the ground ;
His armour doth ring with a hollow sound,
From the bars of his vizor a voice is heard,
But no man could tell that fearful word,
'Twas the cry of a fiend in agony,
Then vanish'd from earth his steed and he ;
The black knight had fallen before the glance
Of that angelic countenance.
But how hath the angel vanish'd away ?
Oh ! how he went no mortal could say,
But a wild shriek rung through the misty air,
And each man said to his neighbour in fear
" St. Michael hath smitten the fiend with his spear."

What makes the legend still more extravagant is, that the miracle does not seem to have answered the purpose of maintaining St. Bettelin in his insular position. For the Saint, in Plot's words, " disturbed

by some that envied his happiness, removed into some desert mountainous places, where he ended his life, leaving Bethnei to others, who afterwards built it, and called it Stafford, there being a shallow place in the river hereabout, that could easily be passed with the help of a staff only." Ethelfleda built Stafford, the widow of Ethelred, earl of Mercia, in 918. "Now whereabouts," Plot continues, "this desert place should be, that St. Bertelline went to, though histories are silent, yet I have some grounds to think that it might be about Throwley, Ilam, and Dovedale ; and that this was the St. Bertram who has a well, an ash, and a tomb at Ilam."

Yet, after all, some facts are needed, to account for the honour in which St. Bettelin was held at Stafford. Those facts, however, are not found in history. We know little or nothing more, than that he was the patron of the town, where a Church was built under his invocation. The fame of miracles would of course explain an increase of devotion shown to him there, could we once trace the circumstances which first introduced his name ecclesiastically into the place.

Of these miracles wrought in his Church, the record of one remains, appended at a later date to the history of Prior Alexander, and its matter-of-fact tone curiously contrasts with the wild fable already related, which goes immediately before it.

"There was," says the anonymous writer, "in the town of Stafford, a man named Willmot, a cook by trade. This man, for many years, almost sixteen, had lost his sight, so as not to be able to go out of doors without some one to lead him. At length, after many years, he was brought to St. Bertellin's Church in the same town, for the purpose of recovery ; and while he

knelt in prayer, before the altar of St. Bertellin, and the priest, whose name was John Chrostias, offered up the Eucharist in the mass to the Supreme Father, the aforementioned blind man regained his sight, and first saw that Venerable Sacrament, rendering thanks to the Supreme God, who had renewed His ancient miracles, for the love of blessed Bertellin. This miracle took place in the year of our Lord 1386."

And this is all that is known, and more than all,—yet nothing to what the angels know,—of the life of a servant of God, who sinned and repented, and did penance and washed out his sins, and became a Saint, and reigns with Christ in heaven.

Legend of St. Neot.

INTRODUCTION.

It is not pretended that every fact in the following Legend can be supported on sound historical evidence. With the materials which we have, it would not only be presumptuous, but impossible, to attempt to determine any thing with any certainty, respecting them ; how much is true, how much fiction. It is enough that we find them in the writings of men who were far better able to know the certainty of what they said than we can be. At the same time, there are certain features in the authorities to which we refer, which seem to call for some particular notice. There are five old Lives of St. Neot extant ; one in Saxon, dating about a hundred and fifty years after his death ; the others, in Latin, written at various subsequent periods. Now of these, the first thing we remark is a striking disagreement in the details of the several narratives. The same sharp clear outline of a character is preserved throughout, but the filling up of the picture seems to vary with the taste and purpose of the writer. The Saxon Life gives one miracle ; the early Latin Lives give others ; while Ramsay of Croyland, the only one

of them who proposes to relate *ascertained facts*, omits all except the last appearance in the battle at Ethendun, and acknowledges openly that, however true the Cornish Legends may be, he cannot find sufficient evidence to justify him in giving them a place in a History constructed as his. Further, while all the others have fallen into the grave anachronism of placing St. Dunstan at Glastonbury, at the period of St. Neot's residence there, Ramsay alone has avoided this. Now of course this sort of scrupulousness infinitely enhances the value of his testimony for what he does say ; but it also indicates a doubt on his part, of the entire credibility in all their parts of his materials. And we observe again, of the other Lives, that all their facts are related with extreme minuteness and accuracy of detail. Now this, if not the highest evidence in their favour, (which it may be) would seem to indicate that they allowed themselves a latitude in their narratives, and made free use of their imagination to give poetic fulness to their compositions. In other words, their Lives are not so much strict biographies, as myths, edifying stories compiled from tradition, and designed not so much to relate facts, as to produce a religious impression on the mind of the hearer. Under the most favourable circumstances, it is scarcely conceivable that uninspired men could write a faithful history of a miraculous life. Even ordinary history, except mere annals, is all more or less fictitious ; that is, the facts are related, not as they really happened, but as they appeared to the writer ; as they happen to illustrate his views or support his prejudices. And if this is so of common facts, how much more so must it be when all the power of the marvellous is thrown in to stimulate the imagination. But to see fully the dif-

ficulties under which the writers of these Lives must have laboured, let us observe a few of the ways in which we all, and time for us, treat the common history and incidents of life.

First ; We all write Legends. Little as we may be conscious of it, we all of us continually act on the very same principle which made the Lives of Saints such as we find them ; only perhaps less poetically.

Who has not observed in himself, in his ordinary dealings with the facts of every-day life, with the sayings and doings of his acquaintance, in short, with every thing which comes before him as a *fact*, a disposition to forget the real order in which they appear, and re-arrange them according to his theory of how they ought to be ? Do we hear of a generous self-denying action, in a short time the real doer and it are forgotten ; it has become the property of the noblest person we know ; so a jest we relate of the wittiest person, frivolity of the most frivolous, and so on ; each particular act we attribute to the person we conceive most likely to have been the author of it. And this does not arise from any wish to leave a false impression scarcely from carelessness ; but only because facts refuse to remain bare and isolated in our memory ; they will arrange themselves under some law or other ; they must illustrate something to us—some character—some principle—or else we forget them. Facts are thus perpetually, so to say, becoming unfixed and re-arranged in a more conceptional order. In this way, we find fragments of Jewish history in the Legends of Greece, stories from Herodotus become naturalized in the tradition of early Rome ; and the mythic exploits of the northern heroes, adopted by the biographers of our Saxon kings. So, uncertain traditions of miracles,

with vague descriptions of name and place, are handed down from generation to generation, and each set of people, as they pass into their minds, naturally group them round the great central figure of their admiration or veneration, be he hero or be he saint. And so with the great objects of national interest. Alfred—"England's darling"—the noblest of the Saxon kings, became mythic almost before his death ; and forthwith, every institution that Englishmen most value, of law or church, became appropriated to him. He divided England into shires ; he established trial by jury ; he destroyed wolves, and made the country so secure, that golden bracelets hung untouched in the open road. And when Oxford was founded, a century was added to its age ; and it was discovered that Alfred had laid the first stone of the first college, and that St. Neot had been the first Professor of Theology.

2. Again even in these unpoetical times, go where we will among the country villages, and we still find superstition strong as ever, we must still confess that the last victory of civilization is not yet won, and romance is yet lingering in the embrace of nature. The wild moor, the rock, the river, and the wood, have still their legend, and the Fairy and the Saint yet find a home when the earth is wild and beautiful. Of course they will go with light and modern education, and perhaps it is as well that it should be so. Even Plato finds that Boreas and Orithuia is an allegory. But it may still be asked whether there are not times when the most civilized, the most enlightened philosopher, looking at Nature as he has to do through his knowledge of Law, and Theory, and Principle, has not experienced very strange sensations in scenes of striking beauty, in a thunder storm, or at the sight of the most

familiar place in the light of an unusual sky? Who is there that has searched and explored and dwindled as he searched so low as never with Wordsworth—

——to have “felt a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things——”

If there be any with power of mind so great that they can keep these deep emotions fresh and pure, and yet leave them purely spiritual, let them do so. Such is not the lot of ordinary men. For them at least Plotinus expressed the very condition of their apprehending them at all when he said, “that those only could be said to have realized the spiritual, who had clothed it in form of sense.” And so ever children, and child-like ages, who make up for the want of vigour in the understanding by the strength of their faith and the fervour of poetry and imagination, go out and robe these vanishing feelings in shape and colour. The old Greeks saw Naiads sporting in every fountain, and when the breezes played among the branches of the forest, they heard the Zephyrs whispering to the Dryads; and the Legends of Saints which still cling to the scenes of their earthly glory, are but Christian expressions of the same human instinct.

And those illusions, which excite the scorn
Or move the pity of unthinking minds,
Are they not mainly outward ministers
Of Inward Conscience? with whose service charged

They come and go, appeared and disappear ;
Diverting evil purposes, remorse
Awakening, chastening an intemperate grief
Or pride of heart abating : and whene'er
For less important ends those phantoms move,
Who would forbid them if their presence serve
Among wild mountains and unpeopled heaths,
Filling a space else vacant to exalt
The form of Nature and enlarge her powers.¹

3. Time in another way plays strange tricks with facts, and is ever altering, shifting, and even changing their nature in our memory. Every man's past life is becoming mythic to him ; we cannot call up again the feelings of our childhood, only we know that what then seemed to us the bitterest misfortunes, we have since learnt by change of character or circumstance, to think very great blessings ; and even when there is no change, and were they to recur again, they are such as we should equally repine at, yet by mere lapse of time sorrow is turned to pleasure, and the sharpest pang at present becomes the most alluring object of our retrospect. The sick bed, the school trial, loss of friends, pain and grief of every kind, become rounded off and assume a soft and beautiful grace. "Time dissipates to shining æther the hard angularity of facts ;" the harshest of them are smoothed and chastened off in the past like the rough mountains and jagged rocks in the distant horizon. And so it is with every other event of our lives ; read a letter we wrote ten years ago, and how impossible we find it to recognize the writer in our altered selves. Incident after incident rises up and bides its day, and then sinks back into the landscape.

¹ Wordsworth, vol. vi. p. 145.

It changes by distance, and we change by age. While it was present it meant one thing, now it means another, and to-morrow perhaps something else on the point of vision alters. Even old Nature endlessly and patiently reproducing the same forms, the same beauties, cannot reproduce in us the same emotions we remember in our childhood. Then all was Fairy-land ; now time and custom have deadened our sense, and

The things which we have seen we now can see no more.

This is the true reason why men people past ages with the superhuman and the marvellous. They feel their own past was indeed something miraculous, and they cannot adequately represent their feelings except by borrowing from another order of beings.

Thus age after age springs up, and each succeeds to the inheritance of all that went before it ; but each age has its own feelings, its own character, its own necessities ; therefore receiving the accumulations of literature and history, it absorbs and fuses and remodels them to meet the altered circumstances. The histories of Greece and Rome are not yet exhausted, every new historian finds something more in them. Alcibiades and Catiline are not to us what they were to Thucydides and Sallust, even though we use their eyes to look at them. So it has been with facts, and so it always shall be. It holds with the lives of individuals, it holds with histories even where there is contemporary writing, and much more than either, when as with many of the Lives of the Saints, we can only see them as they appeared through the haze of several generations with no other light but oral tradition.

And with the subject of the present memoir there is

yet a further difficulty. The authority for the Cornish Miracles, at least the early ones, is only the word of his servant Barius. Now all accounts agree that St. Neot strictly charged him to mention none of them until his death, so that at any rate a long period must have elapsed before they could be committed to writing at all. Whether this was done however by any one before the Saxon Life which we have was written, it is impossible to tell. The writer makes no mention of any other source but tradition. There may or may not have been memorials preserved in the monastery ; but if not the very earliest written account cannot date earlier than a hundred and fifty years after his death.

Thus stands the case then. A considerable period has elapsed from the death of a Saint, and certain persons undertake to write an account of his very remarkable life. We cannot suppose them ignorant of the general difficulties of obtaining evidence on such subjects ; what materials they worked with we have no means of ascertaining ; they do not mention any. Now supposing them to have been really as vague as they seem, let us ask ourselves what we should have done under similar circumstances. Of course we should attempt no more than what we do as it is,—if we could not write a Life we should write a Legend. And it is mere assumption to take for granted that either they or any other under similar circumstances ever intended more. And this view seems confirmed if we look to their purpose. The monks of the middle ages were not mere dry annalists, who strung together hard catalogues of facts for the philosophers of modern Europe to analyze and distil and resolve into principles. Biography and history were with them simple and direct methods of teaching character. After all, the facts of a man's

life are but a set of phænomena, frail weary weeds in which the idea of him clothes itself. Endless as the circumstances of life are, the forms in which the same idea may develop itself, given a knowledge of the mechanic forces, and we can calculate the velocities of bodies under any conceivable condition. The smallest arc of a curve is enough for the mathematician to complete the figure. Take the character therefore and the powers of a man for granted, and it is very ignorant criticism to find fault with a writer because he embodies them in this or that fact, unless we can be sure he intended to leave a false impression.

What we have been saying then comes to this. Here are certain facts put before us, of the truth or falsehood of which we have no means of judging. We know that such things have happened frequently both among the Jews and in the history of the Church ; and therefore there is no *a priori* objection to them. On the other hand we are all disposed to be story tellers ; it is next to impossible for tradition to keep facts together in their original form for any length of time ; and in those days at any rate there was a strong poetical as well as religious feeling among the people. Therefore as the question, “were these things really so ?” cannot be answered, it is no use to ask it. What we should ask ourselves is, Have these things a meaning ? Do they teach *us* any thing ? If they do, then as far as we are concerned, it is no matter whether they are true or not as facts ; if they do not, then let them have all the sensible evidence of the events of yesterday, and they are valueless.

A few remarks on the other authorities which we have quoted, shall conclude this already too long preface.

The appearance at St. Peter's church at York is related in one of Alcuin's letters ; it is only a fragment however, and preserved by William of Malmesbury, who is the only authority for its genuineness. The story of the enchanted raven is told by Asser, and is in that part of his work which has never been questioned ; the long passage however which is translated relating to Alfred and St. Neot, there are some doubts about, as it is not found in the earliest manuscript. That Ragnar Lodbrog was murdered by Ella, and not in East Anglia (as the Lives of St. Edmund say,) is concluded from the *Quida Lodbrokar*, supposed to be the composition of Aslauga, and the unanimous voice of the Danish historians.

What authority Ramsay had before him when writing his Life does not appear. It seems clear however from the way in which he speaks, that he had such (beyond what has come down to us) at least for the Ethendun miracle. His account of this is entirely supported by Nicholas Harpsfeld, who makes long extracts from certain Annals of Winton. But of these Annals nothing is now known. They cannot be found, nor is it known what or where they were.

Dr. Whitaker seems successfully to have proved the identity of St. Neot and Prince Athelstan of Kent. All the Old Lives state positively that Neot was the eldest son of Ethelwulf. That in Latin verse (the oldest of the Latin Lives) that he was brought up a soldier. Again, all the old historians agree that Ethelwulf had but five sons. Athelstan by an early marriage ; Alfred and his three brothers by a late. These four last sat successively on the throne of England, and were buried at Winton. Athelstan remains alone unaccounted for. He disappears at once after the great battle of Sand-

wich, in 851. Dr. Whitaker's elaborate Life of St. Neot however will abundantly supply any further curiosity on this subject, as well as on the other very controverted one, the removal of the relics into Huntingdonshire, which we have not alluded to, not as questioning the fact, but because it is of no interest except to an Antiquarian.

Legend of St. Neot.

SECTION I.

PRINCE ATHELSTAN.

THE stars shone out on the bay of Sandwich, and the song of revelry and mirth had succeeded to the war-cry and the din of the battle. Twenty thousand Northmen lay dead and dying on the down and on the shore, and the mead and the ale was flowing in the camp of the Saxons. Yet was there one among the victors that found no rest for his wearied spirit in the excitement of the banquet; the frantic festivities of his fierce countrymen seemed not to him a fit mode of thanksgiving, for deliverance from a ruthless heathen foe; and in the calm silence of the night, he sought to be alone with his God, to offer praise to Him for that day's success. The eagle plume in his bonnet declared him of the royal race of Cerdic, and though his person was small, almost diminutive, yet his noble gait and princely bearing seemed to say he was no degenerate son of that illustrious family;—it was Athelstan, the Prince of Kent. Alone he stood upon the battle-field, and would have prayed, but for the strange tumult of

disordered thoughts that pressed upon his spirit ; there lay the dead and the dying ; and the dull moan of agony, and the sharp cry of the parting soul, mixed harshly with the howl of the gathering wolves, and the shrill scream of the eagle and the sea fowl. It seemed to his fevered imagination, as if the spirits of hell were flocking there for their prey ; for the warriors that lay there were heathen Danes, Odin's sworn slaves, and bound with a deadly curse to blot out the name of Christian in Saxon England. Yet was there calm above, in the bright Heaven ; and the stars that shone so silently, and the peaceful sea, told him that, though man was wild and evil, yet was creation still fair—still offered willing and obedient service to its Maker. The very drunken music of the war banquet became pure in the night air, and fell with softening cadence on his ear. The ripple washed upon the shore in measured intervals ; and he felt as he listened, that there are powers above, which man knows not of ; a will serenely working in this world of shadows, which is not man's will, as the waves of time roll on, and break upon the shores of eternity.

Well had the young prince borne him that day in the battle ; where the strife had been the hottest, there had risen loudest the war-cry of Kent ; his hand had been red with slaughter, and he repented not of this, for he had done but his duty as a faithful servant of the Cross ; yet he felt it was an awful thing to disembody a living soul. He had that day won a great victory ; the storm-cloud that threatened to wrap his country in fire and desolation, was for a time dispersed ; yet he feared still, for he remembered the prophecy of Alcuin. England had had warning that if she repented not, she should be delivered into the hands of

the Heathen ; and England had given no credence, but went on still in wickedness.

Fifty years before had Lindisfarne felt the fury of the Danes, and from amidst the smoking ruins rose the prophet's voice :—

¹ “Behold how the shrine of St. Cuthbert runs red with the blood of God's priests, and the most holy place in Britain is given over a prey into the hands of the heathen. What meaneth that shower of blood which I saw fall from the north, under a clear sky, on the altar of St. Peter's Church, at York, but that by the northern nations blood shall be shed in this land ?”

And to Ethelward, Archbishop of Canterbury, he had written further,—

“Now, because of the scourge which has already fallen on parts of this island, in which our fathers have lived three hundred and forty years, I would have you know what Gildas, the wisest of the Britons says, that these same Britons, because the nobles were corrupt and avaricious, the bishops indolent, the people luxurious and profligate, had lost their country. Beware, therefore, how these same vices grow to a head among ourselves ; that God in His mercy may yet preserve to us in peace and comfort, that land which He has thought fit to give to us.”

² And the sun had been darkened, and awful signs and wonders had been seen in the heavens ; huge sheets of lightning rushing through the air, and whirlwinds, and fiery dragons flying across the heavens, and these tokens had been followed by a great famine ; yet for all this Athelstan knew that these warning voices

¹ Alcuin Opera. vol. i. Epist. 9, and 12. .

² Saxon Chronicle.

had not been heard ; that England had grown worse instead of better. The treacheries of Offa to St. Ethelbert were unavenged ; the blood of the young St. Kenelm still cried to heaven. The Thaness of Wessex, who had restrained themselves under the strong hand of the despotic Egbert, under the feebler rule of his successor, had broken loose into every kind of lawless violence ; for Ethelwulf had been dragged unwillingly from the cloister to the throne, and the serene quiet of a monastery had unfitted him for the control of a fierce and turbulent nobility. Abbeys and monasteries were everywhere falling into decay ; scarce any but the poor and the ignorant were to be found among their inmates. An unnatural schism divided the Church, and the Saxons, and the British of Wales and Cornwall, lay mutually each under the curse of the other. The Church herself, leant for her support on the arm of the flesh ; and bishop Aelstan, of Shirborne, was Athelstan's colleague in command that very day. But Athelstan had been trained in the way he should go, by the venerable St. Swithun, his father, king Ethelwulf's, dearest friend ; and under his tutelage, had learnt where to look for help in the day of trouble. He would not trust in his bow ; it was not his sword that could help him, but God's right hand, and His arm and the might of His countenance. Therefore, when God was wroth with His people, and had sworn that unless they repented He would cut them off, and they had not repented, He had sworn, and would He not perform ? Without His favour, the armies of the Saxons would be scattered like dust before the wind. There was yet time ; the last day of trial was not yet past ; they had that day won a great battle ; but penitence, and prayer, and humiliation,

could alone avail to obtain that without which all else was useless, and in the moment of victory, he felt its uselessness. He remembered the lessons of his teacher, that the truest warrior was he who warred with evil, by prayer and fasting, in its immediate home, in the heart of man ; and therefore, from his childhood, prince Athelstan had longed to make his home in the seclusion of the cloister. But he was then an only son ; and as his father in like case had obeyed when so obliged, so he, for his country's sake, had done what he conceived his duty, and had grown up a warrior. But since that time, king Ethelwulf had taken another wife, and four goodly sons were born to him, and so was the bar which existed between him and the hope of his youth, taken away ; and early cravings and high aspirations now in this solemn hour came streaming back upon his soul ; he remembered where his royal ancestor, king Ina, when tired of the vanity of a throne, had found peace at last ; and how in holy seclusion, King Offa had tried to wash away with tears the foul remembrance of his crime. Might not he too do better for his country thus, as well as for himself ? She had no lack of warriors, but few and scanty indeed were her Saints ; and never did devout lips at Easter Festival, crave more eagerly for the holy wafer, than did now prince Athelstan for the angelic food of fast and penance in the monastic cell ; and he kneeled down there upon the battle-field, and prayed for guidance. Now, whether it was that a deep sleep fell upon him, or a bodily form there presented itself to his waking senses, but an angel from heaven appeared to him, and bade him be of good heart, and go and do as he desired. He had chosen the good part and God was with him.

SECTION II.

GLASTONBURY ABBEY.

HERE therefore may properly be said to commence the life of St. Neot. The princely warrior, who had well and boldly fought the good fight with the worldly and carnal servants of the Evil One, was now thought worthy of the more honourable yet more dangerous post, to fight him in spirit in his own dominions ; and as he put off the world, so put he off with it, all to the last link that bound him to it ; father and brothers, and rank and wealth and kingdom, he forsook all, even his name. Prince Athelstan became the monk Neotus ; the very meaning of his new title “the renewed,” implies, that his past life was to be as though it had not been ; or as the life of another man. In such change is entire revolution of heart and hope and feeling. It is indeed a death ; a resurrection, a change from earth on earth to heaven on earth ; before he did his duty to God in and through his duty to the world ; now what he does for the world is but indirect, but he is permitted a closer union, a more direct service to God. And therefore those good men who gave their labours to commemorate the life of this holy Saint, do properly commence their task at this point ; and that we too who are permitted to follow in their footsteps, may labour in the same reverential spirit as they laboured ; let us join with Abbot Ramsay of Croyland, and say,—

“Forasmuch as it has pleased Almighty God to remove that holy Saint, Neotus, to the blessed company of Saints in heaven, I have undertaken to record such actions as he performed while here on earth ; therefore

with a deep sense of my own unworthiness for so high a task, I pray to the Fountain of all mercies, that of His infinite goodness He will deign to send me His most gracious help, that I may be enabled to make known such things as are handed down by tradition, concerning this venerable man ; and that I may have him for my protector and intercessor in all dangers."

The Abbey to which he retired was Glastonbury, then under the charge of Abbot Edmund. From what we hear of St. Neot's life there, this Abbey must have formed some exception in point of order and discipline, to the general character of the monasteries of the age ; and perhaps this reason may have influenced him in his election. But Glastonbury had long been a favourite of the race of Cerdic ; Kentwin calls her the " Mother of the Saints," and a charter of immunity and privilege, granted her by Ina, still exists. Most venerable of the Abbeys of England, tradition assigned her for a founder, St. Joseph of Arimathea ; and Holy Patrick spent the last years of his eventful life within her walls. King Ina thought God's blessing was with princes, who used their power for the protection of His Church. In deep faith, and generous spirit, heaped he his favour on this holy place ; only entreating that there should be offered daily prayer and supplication for the remission of his sins, and the prosperity and future welfare of his kingdom ; and because he felt a time might come, when bold bad men should hold the power of the land, and the spoiler might seek to lay his impious hands on God's inheritance ; he solemnly guarded his bequests by a fearful imprecation of God's vengeance on any who should dare interfere with them. Vain precaution ! Nine centuries passed away, and there sat a king on the throne of England, who hanged the last Abbot,

because he lifted up his voice against sacrilege, and refused to surrender the solemn trust which God had given him. Alas for Glastonbury now ! her choirs are silent ; the virgin of England lies in the dust ; her holy places are desolate ; her altars are defiled ; and ivy hangs on the old walls ; the pale stars glimmer through the broken arches on the tombs of the departed Saints ; and the owl and the night-crow keep their long watches in the deserted aisles, where for fifteen hundred years by night and day there went up ceaseless prayers to heaven for the prosperity of England.

King Ina believed in the power of prayer, and did what he did ; and prayer did Neot think surer safeguard than sword or shield ; therefore in his zeal and earnestness to serve in this way, he strove to purify himself, that so he might be heard. Accordingly with the great St. Anthony for his model,

“From the day of his entrance he began sedulously to attach himself to the most holy of those by whom he was surrounded, and endeavoured to emulate their several excellencies. Now in the flower of his youth he climbed as it were step by step, the heights of sanctity ; and gave himself up to do the work of heaven, in the society of such men as he deemed the most devoted servants of God. Like the bees who are wont to blend together the savours of many kinds of flowers, lest the taste be cloyed by a too uniformly simple sweetness ; so did this holy man exhaust and appropriate to himself the particular graces of each several individual, and endeavour after every virtue of self-government ; arming himself thus at all points against the enemy of mankind, lest by one slip or fall he might give him an opportunity of reducing him entirely to his service.

So therefore he imitated one man in his continence, a second in affability and good temper, a third in severity, a fourth in meekness and loving-kindness, a fifth in passing sleepless nights in psalmody. Whoever was most diligent in the study of holy scripture, in fasting and prayer, in humility and mortification, sitting in sackcloth and ashes ; in patient endurance or compassionate forbearance, these he chose as his examples ; and thus possessing in his own person all these vicarious graces, yet was he humble to every one, affable in conversation, considerate and kind in transacting business, calm and dignified in appearance, grave in gesture, sincere and upright, and from his cradle pure and spotless."

His personal property, reserving only what was entirely necessary for his support, he distributed among the poor, and in supplying his necessities, even to his abstemious biographer, his abstemiousness was remarkable. Delicate meat was not for him ; even his coarse black bread he sometimes denied himself, that he might have the more for the poor.

"Bidding his stomach fast long and late, he administered to his soul the daintiest morsels of heavenly food."

He thought not of his royal origin ; he regretted not the pomp and luxury of his youth ; in the dead of the night he left his hard pallet, to offer praise and thanksgiving, and that none might know of these extraordinary devotions, he would change his clothes, and disguised as the meanest of the secular penitents, would watch till daybreak in the Church, and then steal away to his cell and resume his ordinary habit.

Only one relaxation he permitted himself in the severity of his discipline ; and that was the society of

a dear friend ; Athelwold, afterwards Bishop of Winchester, spent his youth in the monastery of Glastonbury, and was the chosen associate of the royal Saint. Among the many beautiful fragments of thought, which yet shine out and smile upon us from out of those dark times, not the least interesting is part of a conversation between these two holy men. The question had turned upon the position of man in the world,—what was his business here ; and Neot illustrated his opinion from our Lord's history.

“In the characters of Mary and Martha, may be seen the two kinds of Christian life ; each a lawful and each in its way a happy one ; the life of active labour in the world, the contemplative life of retirement from it. Martha is the first. She ministers to our Lord's necessities, and her conduct is not displeasing ; but Mary is thought deserving the higher praise, who knows no place but the feet of Jesus, who knows no business but to listen to his words. Let it be ours to choose like Mary the one thing needful ; let us not be like Martha troubled about many things. Do I then recommend idleness ? Nay, for life is short, and labour is profitable, and idleness is destructive to the soul. *The choice is in the kind of work.* Our work is the spiritual work, to subdue the flesh and live after the Spirit, to do the things of the Spirit. Ours is the good part to seek only the way of eternal life, and pursue it to the end, that so hereafter we may be found in the number of those who have been obedient to their Lord.”

So taught Neot, and so he lived. From following the example of others, he became himself an example to all others, in fasting and prayer, in watchings often, in giving of alms, in the care of the poor, in the study

of holy scripture, and in all manner of holy conversation. Such unusual sanctity in so young a man soon attracted general notice. His name spread far, and the Bishop sent for him and held long conversations with him. On this occasion he was permitted to enter on his Diaconate ; and received on his return to the monastery, the office of Sacristan. There is but one thing told of his conduct while holding this position,—his reverential care of the holy vessels ; and this may seem at first but a small matter, scarcely worth recording, until we remember what these vessels are, and what their use. Perhaps the words of an English poet on this subject may lead us to a right appreciation of it.³

“ Never was gold or silver graced thus
Before.

To bring this body and this blood to us
Is more

Than to crown kings
Or be made rings,
For star-like diamonds to glitter in.

* * * *

When the great king offers to come to me
As food,
Shall I suppose his carriages can be
Too good ?

No ! stars to gold
Turned never could
Be rich enough to be employed so.

If I might wish then, I would have this bread,
This wine,
Vesseled in what the sun might blush to shed
His shine

³ Hervey, the Synagogue.

When he should see—
But till that be
I'll rest contented with it as it is.

Thus steadily trod Neot on the path of sanctity. He used no adventitious means to rise to rank and place ; he in the Abbey walls was but as the meanest of the people ; earthly crown was his by birthright ; glory and honour he had won by talent and by daring ; but he knew that to the heavenly crown for which he struggled, and the favour of God for which he thirsted, there led but one way—the way of holiness.

So highly honourable was St. Neot's conduct, that long before the ordinary period of his Diaconate expired, he was recommended for the office of Priest. Unwillingly he accepted this new honour. So deeply unworthy he felt himself, that it was almost by force that he was at last induced to submit. "Surrounded by Laity as well as Clergy, and rather dragged than going of his own free will, he at length received his ordination."

"Dissatisfied with his past conduct now as inadequate for his new calling, all that he had done before he accounted as nothing. He redoubled his acts of piety, and from holy became more holy. His firmness became more enduring ; his abstinence longer ; his humility deeper ; his garments of greater coarseness."

Now too he began to go about among the people instructing and preaching to them.

"Like a never-failing fountain, he gave the thirsty to drink large draughts of the word of God : by his prayers he drove the evil spirits from such as were possessed, and healed such as were diseased in body and in soul." "The people flocked to him for comfort and

advice, and none who sought him ever returned empty. With all he had learnt to sympathize. Rejoicing with those that rejoiced, and weeping with those that wept, he became all things to all men, that he might win all to Christ."

And as time went on, God left him not without special mark of His favour, and not only thus enabled him to scatter His benefits among the people ; but that all men might know that such a life as his, did indeed raise its possessor above the weaknesses and imperfections of this mortal life, He began to work sensible miracles by his hand.

It was the custom of the monks of the Abbey, at the hour of mid-day, to retire alone to their several cells, for private prayer and meditation. This hour was held sacred, and no communication of any sort was permitted among the brethren. Neot, whose cell was nearest to the great gate of the monastery, was disturbed in his devotions by a violent and continued knocking. On repairing to the grating to ascertain the cause, he discovered a person who might not be refused, pressing in haste for admission ; he immediately hurried to the door, but, to his confusion and perplexity, he found that from the smallness of his stature he was unable to reach the lock. The knocking now became more violent, and Neot, in despair of natural means of success, prayed to God for assistance. Immediately, the lock slid gently down the door, until it reached the level of his girdle, and thus he was enabled to open it without further difficulty. This remarkable miracle is said to have been witnessed to by all the brethren, for the lock continued in its place, and the people flocked together from all quarters to see it.

SECTION III.

NEOT THE HERMIT.

HOLY are the characters of those whom God chooses to do His work on earth. The powers of nature forgot their wonted courses, and submitted to the will of St. Neot, but long and arduous penance was yet before him, ere his spirit should be sanctified to do the work of an apostle. The hardy children of the race of the Cymry, from their rocky fastnesses in Wales and Cornwall, still beheld with hatred the proud Saxon in the halls of their own ancestors, and refused to recognize them as brethren, even in the common ties of Christian fellowship. Proudly they stood aloof from Christendom, and because the Saxon was in communion with Rome, they denounced as Antichrist its holy bishop ;⁴ arrogantly vaunting to themselves the proud title of the Apostolic Church of England. From the heights of Dartmoor to where the restless waves of the Atlantic wash the far point of Tol Peden Penwith the crusading armies of Egbert found easy passage through the deserted vallies, while in their inaccessible mountain fortresses, the British laughed to scorn such efforts to subdue them ; entangled in the deep ravines, and where advance had been so easy, finding bridges broken, valleys closed up, and passes occupied by these hardy mountain bands, retreat was now impossible ; troop after troop of the invaders fell victims to the fury of the people, and a miserable remnant of Egbert's gallant army only

⁴ Roger de Wendov. p. 91. Bede Hist. Eccl. lib. ii. Wm. Malmsbury. Also, Borlase. Hist. of the Antiquities of Cornwall.

escaped, to tell the fate of the last attempt that was ever made by force of arms on the Cymry of the west.⁵

When the sword had failed, the Church was to be successful, and this unnatural feud was now to end. A humble monk was the chosen instrument of providence to effect this great purpose ; and an angel was sent to St. Neot, at Glastonbury, to bid him prepare himself for a long journey, into an unknown and barbarous land. With unflinching trust, this servant of the Lord obeyed His call. He made no difficulty ; he sought no time for enquiry ; with but one companion, the faithful Barius, having taken affectionate leave of his dear friends, in his much loved monastery, he set out on foot, in the direction the angel bade him. For many days they walked on, over hill and dale, over moor and down, and still the Spirit that moved the Saint, had given no token that he had reached the appointed spot, still urged him forward unremittingly. And they had crossed the rich vales of Somersetshire, and from the high ridge of Dartmoor, they gazed wistfully, for the last time, on the spot they loved so dearly ; yet they pressed on, and now they had penetrated far into the wilderness of Cornwall. Along the wild and desolate range of moorland which divides the county, they were wearily dragging themselves along, the third week after their departure from Glastonbury—avoiding the town of Liskeard, where there lived a fierce chief, who feared not God, and was a deadly enemy of the Saxons ; they were traversing the southern edge of the moor,

⁵ Malmsbury and Wendover say, that Egbert conquered Cornwall as well as Wales. It is clear that there was a desperate slaughter, and that Egbert found it impossible to maintain his ground.

when, at an abrupt turn of a hill, they found themselves on the edge of a deep and narrow gorge, which carries the water of a small river, from a neighbouring morass to the sea. Broken into a succession of small waterfalls, the stream rushed swiftly down the abrupt side of a beautiful valley, and far below them wound gracefully along the green strip of meadow land in the bottom, while the luxuriant foliage of the dense masses of wood which clothed its sides, showed in grateful contrast to the long dreary tract over which they had passed. On descending the side of the hill, they came to a place where a rudely constructed basin received the pure water of a fountain, which there first bubbled into light, and, by virtue of a blessing from the good St. Gueryr, possessed a healing influence for all who sought its aid in faith and confidence ; a small chapel adjoining it, and sanctified by the presence of the relics of the same saint, invited them to pause for their devotions, and within its sacred walls, the same angel who bade him go forth from Glastonbury, now brought St. Neot the welcome news that this was his journey's end. Here, in this lonely spot, he was to spend seven years in a hermit's cell, and live by the labour of his own hands ; yet was he not unsupported by Him who had sent him there. From the time of his arrival, to the close of his trial, a continuous sensible miracle declared the abiding presence of the favour of God. They had spent one night there, and the Saint was in the chapel, when Barius came in haste to tell him that three fish were playing in the basin where the fountain rose. St. Neot ordered him on no account to touch them, until he should have himself enquired what this strange thing might mean. In answer to his prayer, the same angel appeared, and told him that the fish were there

for his use, and that every morning one might be taken and prepared for food ; if he faithfully obeyed this command, the supply should never fail, and the same number should even continue in the fountain. And so it was, and ever the three fish were seen to play there, and every morning one was taken and two were left, and every evening were three fish leaping and gamboling in the bubbling stream ; therefore did the Saint offer nightly praise and thanksgiving, for this so wonderful preservation ; and time went on, and ever more and more did St. Neot's holiness grow and expand and blossom. The fruit was yet to come.

“Here he exerted the strength he had acquired before ; and exhibited in his own person the truth of those things which he had learnt in Holy Scripture. The thorns of riches choked him not ; the burdens of this world retarded him not. Forgetting those things which were behind, and reaching forward to those which were before, he ever pressed forward to obtain the prize of his high calling in Christ Jesus.”

His discipline was so strict, and continued with such unrelaxing severity, that on a certain occasion he was taken ill in consequence. The faithful Barius, ever anxious to anticipate his master's smallest want, if by any means some portion of the saintly radiance might so be reflected upon him, was anxious to prepare some food, to be ready for him on his awaking from a sleep into which, after nights of watchfulness, he had at length fallen. Here, however, he was met by a difficulty : his master's illness had reduced him to a state of extreme delicacy, and he was at a loss how he ought to dress his food. Hastily and incautiously he resorted to a dangerous expedient. Instead of one fish, he took two from the basin, and roasting one and boiling the

other, he presented both to St. Neot for choice, on his awaking from his sleep. In dismay and terror the Saint learnt what had been done, and springing from his couch, and ordering Barius instantly to replace both fish as they were in the water, himself spent a night and a day in prayer and humiliation. Then at length were brought the welcome tidings of forgiveness ; and Barius joyfully reported that both fish were swimming in the water. After this, his illness left him, and the supply in the fountain continued as before.

In the monastery of Glastonbury he had learnt the mode of self-discipline by which St. Patrick had attained his saintly eminence, and now in his hermitage he almost rivalled him in austerities. Every morning St. Patrick repeated the Psalter through from end to end, with the hymns and canticles, and two hundred prayers. Every day he celebrated mass, and every hour he drew the holy sign across his breast one hundred times ; in the first watch of the night he sung a hundred psalms, and knelt two hundred times upon the ground ; and at cockerow he stood in water, until he had said his prayers. Similarly each morning went St. Neot's orisons to heaven from out of his holy well ; alike in summer and in the deep winter's cold, bare to his waist, he too each day repeated the Psalter through.

One day when he was thus engaged in the depth of winter, he was disturbed by suddenly hearing the noise of a hunting party riding rapidly down the glen. Unwilling that any earthly being should know of his austerities, but only the One who is over all, he sprung hastily from the water and was retiring to his home, when he dropped one of his shoes. He did not wait to pick it up, but hurried off and completed his devotions in secret.

“And when he had finished his psalms, and his reading, and his prayers, with all diligence and care, he remembered his shoe and sent his servant to fetch it. In the meantime a fox, wandering over hill and vale, and curiously prying into every nook and corner, had chanced to come to the place where the holy man had been standing, and had lighted upon the shoe and thought to carry it off. And an angel who loved to hover in hallowed places, and to breathe an atmosphere which was sanctified by the devotions of God’s Saints, was present there invisibly and saw this thing, and he would not that such an one as St. Neot should be molested even in so small a matter, so that he had sent the sleep of death upon the fox, and Barius when he came there found him dead, arrested at the instant of his theft, yet holding the thongs of his shoe in his mouth. Then he approached in fear and wonder, and took the shoe and brought it to the holy man, and told him all that had happened.”

And as such holy life receives such manifest tokens of the Divine favour and protection, and extraordinary powers display themselves, as the spirit becomes emancipated from its thralldom to the flesh, so was it permitted to exercise its ordinary influence in winning others by its natural dignity and attractiveness. Few persons ever visited St. Neot’s valley except on hunting parties, and another adventure from one of these befell him, as he was engaged as before at his fountain. He was standing by the water when a young and beautiful fawn bounded from the adjoining thicket, and panting from weariness and terror sought a refuge at his feet. Hitherto the poor creature had known man but as its foe, but the serene countenance of the holy man had no terror for the innocent and oppressed, and crouching

closely to him with upturned imploring eyes, it appeared to beseech his protection. Not so the fierce and hungry bloodhounds that followed hot behind. Nature has nothing more terrible to savageness and cruelty than the gentle majesty of virtue ; and the frightened animals shrunk back cowed and overawed into the wood. Up came the wild hunter and hallooed them to the prey, but his hot spirit too was quenched in the pure influences which flowed from the countenance of the Saint ; he felt the warning, the mild rebuke cut him to the heart, and in the first enthusiasm of repentance, he hung up his horn as an offering at the shrine of St. Petrox, and himself assumed the habit of a monk and retired to the same monastery.

And angels sought fellowship with this blessed man, and as the long period of his hermit life passed on, not seldom was he favoured with their high and awful conversation. One more illustrious hunter visited the shrine, and that was his young brother Prince Alfred. In the boyish excitement of the chace he had penetrated into these remote wildernesses beyond the boundaries of his father's dominion ; but he left his sport, and sought his saintly brother for advice and counsel. In early childhood, this noble-hearted boy had learnt to realize the hard lesson that "God scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," and, when oppressed by the infirmity of the flesh, had solemnly prayed that God would be pleased to send upon him some disorder, which might the better enable him to subdue it ; and God had heard his prayer, and had sent the ficus on him, and afflicted him with very grievous sickness ; so grievous indeed, and so severe, that he could no longer bear it, and now, in St. Gueryr's shrine, with his brother's intercession, he prayed that the waters of the

well might exert their healing influence in his favour, and that some other disorder in the room of this, might be sent on him, which he might be the better able to endure ; and this prayer too was heard. And Alfred went back on his way, and became king of England, and Neot went strictly and holily on in his, and for seven years never for one day relaxed the severity of his discipline ; remembering the solemn words of his great Master, "Whoso taketh not his cross and beareth it after me, is not worthy of me." Each did his work on earth ; and if any should ask what earthly work St. Neot had done hitherto for England, in her many trials and dangers, we answer, that though we see not the under current of Providence, and know not *in what way* the mysterious influence of Saints avail, yet we do know that they are the salt of the earth : we do know that ten righteous men would have saved the cities of the plain, and that while just Lot continued within their cursed walls, God Himself declared that He could do nothing.

However this be, as we have seen St. Neot hitherto in one form, we are now to see him in another. Hitherto, though his lamp shone brightly, it shone not to the world. In the earth, but not of the earth, the mysteries of the spirit had been in part unfolded to him ; nature had reversed her laws for him ; angels had been his companions ; and in their serene company, the chains of his earthly prison-house had burst asunder and fallen off from him ; at length he was free. How glorious a state for a frail child of Adam here on earth ; yet was there a more glorious behind. For it is more glorious for one who has tasted the heavenly vision, and has had his dwelling in the mysterious Presence ; his body on earth, his spirit beyond the

stars, to remember his brethren in captivity walking among vain shadows in their prison cave, and disquieting themselves in vain, to forget his more immediate and proper good, to disrobe himself and come down among them, to sway and guide their feeble trembling efforts in the right way. For it is written, that this perplexing life riddle shall never find solution until the Saints possess and rule the earth. Thus came Neot back among mankind ; and that nothing should be done disorderly, although he had received his Apostolic commission from God Himself, yet must it be confirmed by the visible head of the Church on earth, and he went to Rome to receive the benediction of Pope Leo. Nearly two hundred years before a college had been founded there, by the piety of the royal Ina, for the instruction of the Anglo-Saxon students in theology. To this place St. Neot proceeded, and spent many months among them. The fame of the princely anchorite had preceded him, and he was welcomed with the warmest enthusiasm. The holy father gave his fullest sanction to his purpose, and at length dismissed him with his benediction, and the charge to preach the word of God among the people. And now commencing his labours, he did not return home immediately, but made a missionary circuit, teaching among the unconverted tribes of Prussia and northern Germany. The same powers which had been granted to the earliest apostles, were continued to him, and wherever he went he was enabled to work miracles, in attestation of the truth of his mission. “For,” says his biographer, “if Christ be the head of the elect, and the faithful are members of Him, according to the word of the apostle, ‘we being many are one body in Christ,’ what wonder if such members as adhere to Him as their head, should

receive peculiar virtues from that head. St. Neot abides in Christ, and Christ in him ; since He has made him thus to sparkle with miracles, in this fleeting world of shadows."

SECTION IV.

THE MONASTERY.

AT the end of the year, the Saint returned to Neotstowe, not to resume his seclusion, but at length to work the work which God had appointed for him, peacefully to accomplish, by gentle means, what the sword of Egbert had attempted so unsuccessfully, to bring back the schismatic church of Cornwall into the bosom of her mother, and through her to reduce the country itself to peaceful submission to the princes of West Saxony. As a first step to accomplish this purpose, he designed erecting a monastery on the site of his old hermitage, from whence, as from a great reservoir, would be poured out streams of missionaries among the people. His journey to Rome, its known object, and the events which had ensued upon it, added to his previous reputation, gave such publicity to his undertaking, that no sooner was it known to have commenced, than a very remarkable success at once attended it. "Many of the wealthiest nobles forsook the world, and chose with him a life of voluntary hardship and poverty. Many brought their children to him, entreating earnestly that these at least might find a refuge in his flock from the storms and troubles of this wretched world, and be nourished up for the life

eternal." The charity of the neighbouring people provided them with lands, which were kept in cultivation by the lay brothers, for the support of the monastery, and to supply the wants of the neighbouring poor. And here, under the eye of the holy Saint, were bred up those faithful children of the Church Catholic who spread her truth with such success, that we hear no more of Cornish schism ; and but a few years after, the whole West peacefully submitted themselves to the rule of a bishop sent by Saxon Edward. In spite however, of this success abroad, and indeed his general popularity, St. Neot had difficulties of a private nature to contend with, which gave yet further occasion for the interference of providence for his protection. The fierce prince of Liskeard beheld with no small displeasure the rapid growth of a religious, and above all, a Saxon rival, in his immediate neighbourhood. His Briton blood boiled with indignation, to see his enemy thus eating away the very root and core of his own authority, and attracting so unaccountably the hearts and affections of his subjects. From his ignorance of the secret of St. Neot's influence, he was at a loss which way to oppose him. Open personal violence he could not venture upon ; so that he had recourse instead, to a system of galling and tyrannical oppression of the inferior brethren of the House of Neotstowe. He maintained that he had a right to the secular service of all his subjects, and would forcibly compel them to leave their own work and labour for him. They cultivated his soil, attended his cattle, and, like slaves, were made to engage in the most menial service. Now as many of these brethren were members of the noblest British families, chiefs, and the sons of chiefs, and, like himself, descendants of Cadwallon, it may be sup-

posed such treatment was no little trial of their Christian fortitude ; and indeed it was intended to alienate their affections from their new master, who was unable or unwilling to protect them. So matters went on till one harvest time, when, as usual, they were forced into the prince's fields, to carry his corn for him. It was a very large harvest ; they had loaded many wagons, and were driving them home. The road lay along a narrow ridge, with a precipice on one side sheer down into the river. Exactly as they reached this point, a violent squall springing up from the north-west, suddenly catching the carts, overthrew them with all their load at once into the river, where they were totally destroyed. Such an event could not fail of its effect. The prince regarded it as a judgment ; as an intimation that if he persisted in his tyranny, worse might befall him. He withdrew his opposition, and from that day forward never interfered again with the dependants of St. Neot. On another occasion, the cupidity of a band of robbers was attracted by the lonely unprotected situation of the monastery, and they carried off the cattle which were used for the plough. The servants went out as usual to work, in the morning, but came back in dismay to their master, and told him they could find no oxen ; the door of the stable was open, and they were gone. He told them not to be down-hearted, but to return to the field and wait the issue. They obeyed disconsolately ; their plough was now useless to them, and they were counting the weary hours they must spend in digging over that rough field, when on lifting up their eyes, they saw four beautiful stags standing by it, and gracefully bending their heads over the yoke. Hardly venturing to approach, they gazed in mute astonishment, but the creatures' quiet

gentle manner showed so plainly they were waiting for the yoke to be laid upon their necks, that at last they ventured to go up and harness them ; without sign of fear or resistance, they submitted with the most willing gracefulness, and all that day and all the next, they toiled at their unwonted labour. Far and wide spread this strange story, and among those that heard of it, were the very thieves who had been the occasion of the miracle. Frantic with terror, not knowing what might be in store for them, when such means were taken to repair the mischief they had done, they hurried humbly to the feet of St. Neot, to confess their sin and restore his property. And he received them and forgave them, and they in their zeal and sorrow besought him that he would yet take further pity on them ; they feared to return to the world, lest their old habits return upon them, and the devil regain the mastery over their souls ; they would stay where they were, under the shadow of the Saint, and become the servants of him whom they had injured : and so it was ; and these violent and lawless men became numbered among the faithful and the obedient, and in time were raised to office in the sacred ministry. “Such,” exclaims his biographer, with a glow of enthusiasm, “was the wonderful power of this holy Saint. He saved the oxen from the thieves, the stags from their savage nature, and the thieves themselves from the power of the devil.” And the stags went back to their wood and became free again, but they never forgot their lesson of humility, and carried to their deaths upon their bodies the marks of what had befallen them ; and long years after were seen young fawns, sporting in the forests of Liskeard, with the white ring where the yoke had pressed their ancestors, yet visible on their necks.

SECTION V.

ALFRED AND NEOT.

TEN years before parted the two royal brethren, Alfred and St. Neot. They were now to meet again ; and one, alas, how changed ! Then we saw prince Alfred in the glow of young enthusiasm, arming himself for the fight, and setting out right nobly on the christian warrior's course, high in hope and rich in friends, and in the favour of God and man ; now he comes back, a proud, self-willed, overbearing monarch, his subjects discontented at home, a fierce foe pressing on him from without, seeking counsel of his long-neglected brother. His father was dead, his three brothers all dead, and these two stood alone, the sole surviving descendants of the illustrious Cerdic. And one was speedily to be gathered to his fathers, and on the other was the wrath of God to be poured out, and he was to be purified in the furnace of adversity. Long years after, he related to his friend and confessor, bishop Asser, the stories of his youth ; and he, as a warning for those in time to come, recorded the history of the sin and of its punishment.

“Not victory only over his enemies, and success in difficulty, did God think fit to send on him, but He permitted him often to be worn down by his enemies, afflicted with adversities, depressed by the contempt of his own subjects, that he might know that there is one Lord of all, to whom every knee must bow, in whose hand are the hearts of kings, who putteth down the mighty from their seat, and exalteth the humble ; who

willeth sometimes that his faithful servants, while prosperous, shall be struck with the scourge of adversity ; that in depression they may not despair of the mercy of God, and when exalted to honour they may not be puffed up, but may know to whom is due all that they possess. This adversity indeed which befell the king, came not on him undeservedly ; because in the beginning of his reign, when he was yet young and inexperienced, such men of his kingdom as came to him requiring assistance in their difficulties, and such as were oppressed by those in authority and demanded justice at his hands, he refused to listen to, or render them any assistance, but took no account of them at all. For this did that most blessed Saint Neotus, his nearest kinsman, while yet alive in the flesh, grieve from the bottom of his heart, and his prophetic spirit foretold what must befall him for his misconduct. Nevertheless, he regarded not the reproof of the man of God, and refused to receive his words. Because, therefore, whatever sins man doth commit must of necessity be punished either in this world or in the world to come, the true and holy Judge would not that this folly of the king should go unpunished in this present life, to the end, that he might spare him in the strict account hereafter."

How sad is the meeting between two brothers, or men who for any other reason have been very dear to each other, when one has gone astray ! Sin has thrown a broad gulf between their hearts, over which there is no other bridge but penitence. Till then there can be no more sympathy, no more confidence—remembering what he once was, the presence of the friend of purer days adds poignancy to the remorse of the guilty one. His proud spirit chafes at the degradation he cannot

chuse but feel. He seeks refuge from himself in an assumption of reserve and haughtiness, and anger at the reproaches he imagines he sees in every word and glance, closes the avenues to better feelings. And the other,—grief is all the feeling he can have. His affections yearn for the lost one, but they may not reapproach him except through God by prayer. While his heart is bursting, his stern sense of duty forces him to master it. Cold grave rebuke, advice, instruction, is all he may give, but all more sternly far than if they had never been to each other what they were. He may not trust himself to be gentle.

So met Alfred and St. Neot, not as brothers, not in the confiding affectionateness of mutual love ; but as Saul came to Samuel, an unrepentant king to a saint and prophet ; to ask a blessing, to receive a rebuke. First instruction and counsel were tried. “The Saint entertained him honourably, for as much as he was his prince ; but because he governed not his people aright, because he was haughty and forbidding in his manners, and his rule austere and harsh—for these things did the blessed Neot rebuke him and teach him what was the duty of a Christian king.” And it appears that for a time at least his slumbering conscience was awakened, for “he went to his house in awe and great fear ; and from that time forward came frequently to see the Saint, and seek from him advice and counsel.”

Some men, when their hearts condemn them, seek to forget themselves ; like Ahab who hated Micaiah because he prophesied evil concerning him, they fear God’s presence and shrink from every thing which reminds them of Him. These men are cowards, but men of nobler natures, even while unrepentant and yet in their sins, still will not wholly renounce their alle-

giance. Though fallen, they dare look round them and see where they stand. They know their state, but they do not rest contented in it. Therefore they will not yet cast off the last rope of their moorings ; and while they have not energy enough to restrain their passions, they seem still to seek the presence of those who they know will not spare their censures. So Saul clung to Samuel, so Joash to Elisha, so Nebuchadnezzar to Daniel. And so now though "he departed not yet from the evil of his doings," king Alfred came often to see his brother.

At length came the last earthly interview, and the prophecy of final vengeance.

"It came to pass on a day that the king went as he was wont to see the man of God ; who, when he came to him, among many other things, rebuked him again for his misconduct. He set before him the pains of eternal fire, and showed how that those who are mighty upon earth shall hereafter mightily be tormented. And besides this, in the spirit of prophecy, he foretold to him all which should befall him afterwards. 'Thou seest, O king, what now thou sufferest from thine enemies, and thou shalt suffer more hereafter ; for in thy kingdom thou art proud and tyrannical, whereas before the eyes of the Divine Majesty thou oughtest rather with the king and prophet David to have shown thyself meek and humble. Therefore by a foreign nation that knoweth not Christ, thou shalt be driven thence. Alone thou shalt escape from thine enemies, and shalt lie concealed under the hands of God, and so for thy sins thou shalt remain many days. Nevertheless I have obtained for thee by my prayers, that if thou wilt turn from thine iniquities, God will yet have mercy on thee and restore thee to thy state and sceptre. Now there-

fore take thou more wholesome counsel for thyself and people, and send men to Rome with presents for our most reverend Father there, and entreat him that he will of his clemency be pleased to remit the tax upon the English School. And behold I go the way of all flesh : our Lord Jesus Christ has revealed to me that I am soon to depart hence. Now therefore when Divine Providence shall have fulfilled its purpose concerning thee, and shall have rightly punished thee for thy misdeeds, then be thou of good heart, and put thy trust in Him who ruleth all things, and pray for His assistance ; and the Almighty God, by me his servant, shall hear thy prayers and restore thee again to thy place.' ”

And now the day was spent, the evening was come. He had finished his course, he had wrought his work, and St. Neot was to die. He lived not to see the final success of his mission, but the word was gone out, the seed was sown, and in its own good time the fruit came to perfection. Such is ever the lot of God's workmen. They sow and others reap, they lay the foundation, others build the superstructure. A work which is to endure must be done in faith ; and the workman receives his reward, but not on earth. The monastery of Neotstowe was but in its infancy when its founder died ; but to this day men pray and praise in the house which he provided them, and in his own saintly crown in heaven shines the bright jewel of the recovered Church of the West.

Soon after his last interview with king Alfred, St. Neot was attacked by fever. He had been told before that his course was ended, and he knew that this illness was the signal of his departure. But one thing remained for him, once more to receive the Holy Communion, and then straightway in the presence of the

assembled brethren, amidst the pealing of loud anthems and prayers ascending round him up to heaven, he surrendered his soul to God.

With solemn pomp and fear his body was committed to the earth. Gloriously, as when at evening light clouds flock together to gaze at the departing sun, and his last rays as they fall on them bathe them in unutterable splendour, were shed the last influences of this holy man on those who crowded to his funeral. For the houses where Saints have had their dwelling place are holy as they were holy. Those temples which so large a measure of God's Spirit has deigned to hallow by its presence, become impregnated by its blessed influence, and are not as those of other men. The spirit returns to Him who gave it, and the body to the dust ; but it is ransomed from the power of corruption ; though it dissolves it decays not. The natural body shrinks and shrivels up like decaying leaves. These holy tabernacles in decomposing shed round them fragrance, like the flowers of paradise.

Multitudes of persons from all quarters came together to take a last farewell of the person of their beloved St. Neot, and all who came within the power of the rich odour which exhaled from him as he lay there, became divinely refreshed in soul and body. Those who had diseases were healed every one ; they needed not so much as to touch the body ; they gazed upon it, and the evil spirit which tormented them fled away in terror and dismay. Those that he won at his death were more than those whom he won when he was living ; and in a short time the number of persons who craved admittance to his monastery became so great that it was necessary to enlarge the Church. On this occasion the body was moved "with great care and trem-

bling ; with long watchings, and fasting and prayer, it was taken from the place where it was first laid, and re-buried on the north side of the high altar, where it now lies. Again, when it was exposed, the same rich fragrance issued from it and filled the Church, and again did those holy relics answer to the devout approaches of the diseased by an immediate cure. And for the merits of the same most holy Saint, the favour and blessing of Almighty God yet rested on that spot, and ceased not to be poured forth there in answer to the prayers of the faithful.”

SECTION VI.

THE DANES.

FROM the deep dungeons of Ella of Northumberland, where serpents were writhing round him and fastening their envenomed fangs into his flesh, rose the death chaunt of Ragnar Lodbrog. Far over the wide waves rolled the wild notes to the chamber of the Scalld Aslauga, his sorceress consort. Swift sped she the spear messenger among the fierce vikingr ; and the nobles of Norway and of Denmark vowed a terrible revenge. Three kings and nine earls joined their forces to the sons of the murdered monarch, and the most mighty armament that had ever left the shores of the Baltic, now set sail for Northumberland. North and south, east and west England was to be laid desolate ; the hated name of Christian was to be blotted out, and Odin's recreant slaves forced again to bend before the

God of their ancestors. Hinguar and Hubba for revenge, Guthrum, Healfden and Bagsar for booty and conquest, and all maddened with savage superstition, fell like a pack of howling wolves on the forces of Northumberland. The enchanted standard of the Raven, woven in one summer noon by Ragnar's daughters, floated in the van, and the foul bird, animated by some infernal spirit, snuffed the coming carnage and croaked and clapped its wings. The troops of the Saxons were scattered like chaff. The murderous tyrant Ella was flayed alive and flung a prey to the eagle and the kite. The prophecy of Alcuin was terribly fulfilled. The iniquity of the wretched Saxons was now full, and vengeance drew a bloody pen across the appalling amount.

And yet the most awful part of such national inflictions is, that not the guilty only perish, but the indiscriminating wave of calamity sweeps all alike before it, the innocent with the wicked. On the monasteries fell most heavily the Danish fury. They were reputed rich ; they were defenceless ; above all, in them lay the vital spirit of Christianity. Scarce one through all England escaped. It would be sickening to follow their course ; the scenes are of too uniformly horrible a character. Yet some few instances of Christian heroism flash out and call for eternal honour. The nunnery of Coldingham lay in the path of the Danes, and full well knew Ebba, the abbess, that worse than death awaited her flock. What were they to do ? Escape they could not ; die by their own hands they might not. She called the sisterhood together. It was after vespers, and the Danes would be there the next morning. She said she knew of but one way ; she would set them the example, they might follow if they would.

Their beauty was their worst enemy ; destroy that and they were safe. She drew a knife from under her robe, and herself severed her nose and lips. In silence all followed her terrible example. The savage spoiler came for his prey ; but when they looked for beauty, to satiate their foul lust, they found but hideous and ghastly figures, foul with blood. Back rushed the baffled fiends, in mingled fear and loathing, and in their disappointed fury, burnt that noble band of immaculates in the fires of their own abbey. Some gallant stands were made in Mercia and East Anglia. Priests and monks buckled on their armour, and went out to the battle to be slain. Burrhed, of Mercia, fled to Rome, and St. Edmund, of East Anglia, was barbarously murdered. The monks of Croyland, with Prior Toly, went out and fought desperately, but they were all destroyed, and the monastery, with all its occupants, reduced to a heap of ashes. Abbot Theodore fell like a Christian warrior ; he was slaughtered at his own altar, celebrating mass. Of all the kingdoms of the Octarchy, Wessex alone remained untouched. Had Alfred but continued firm and steadfast, as he had begun, who can tell but it might have yet been spared ? But even this great prince too, for a while forgot himself. St. Neot's warnings were despised, and now his threatenings were to be accomplished. For six years of his reign, the stroke was delayed by the long-suffering of God. At length it fell. By a long course of tyranny and injustice, and perhaps even worse crimes, (for these are hinted at) Alfred, once the darling of West Saxony, had alienated the affections of his people, and now he was only hated and despised. In the spring of the year 877, the armies of the Danes came down upon him : his subjects deserted him, and submitted every-

where to the invaders : he found himself, without striking a blow, a fugitive and an outcast. St. Neot's prophecy was fulfilled ; he was driven for a time from the throne he had disgraced, and sunk to such abject misery, that at one time no one of his subjects knew where he was, or what had become of him.

In the marshes of Somersetshire, lay an island, formed by the alluvial deposit of the Thone and the Parret, of considerable extent ; a deep morass divided it from the mainland, and its sides were covered with a low rough copsewood ; the centre was open, and sufficiently large to find employment for a neatherd. No trace of it now remains. The soil has sunk ; the floods wash over the whole, but to Alfred it furnished a retreat from the pursuit of the Danes. Entirely alone, he presented himself at the neatherd's cottage ; he said he was an officer of the king's army, and requested the shelter of their roof, till better times enabled him to return to the world. Alfred's great error, as king, had been neglect of his poorer subjects. With a singular aptness of retribution, he was condemned to beg protection from one of the very poorest, and to receive it only on condition of his performing the most menial services for him. How hard a trial for one so little used to self-restraint ! And yet he bore it uncomplainingly ; and there was even worse in store for him. The neatherd's wife one day left him in charge of the cakes which were baking before the fire. Alfred's thoughts unfortunately wandered ; his charge was neglected, the cakes were burnt. The old woman had a tongue, and was not sparing in the use of it ; indeed, the legend says, she not only scolded, but struck the king ; but he submitted with the most patient resignation ; a sure proof that he was returning to himself

again. After this trial, the severest part of Alfred's punishment was remitted. He found means of communicating with a few of his friends : his wife and children joined him, and a small body of his followers. Together, they erected a fortification in the island, and supported themselves by fishing, and pillaging from the Danes. Marked as he had been by heaven from the first, he was not now deserted in his affliction. One holy Saint, while yet in the body, had foretold his downfall ; another, now in spirit, came to give him hopes of restoration. "Men have entertained angels unawares." One day in the depth of winter, his men being all out fishing, he was sitting reading with his wife, when a beggar knocked at the door, and entreated charity for Christ's sake. Their stock of food was scanty ; one loaf was all ; but Alfred took it, and breaking it in two, with the words, "Blessed be God in all his gifts," he gave half of it to the poor man, adding that He who could feed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes, would make that sufficient for his necessities. The beggar departed ; the king resumed his reading, and presently fell asleep. In a dream, the holy Cuthbert appeared to him ; he was the poor beggar ; he had been sent to try him whether he was indeed turned back from his evil ways. Nobly had Alfred borne the trial ; he should not lose his reward ; his restoration was at hand, and as a token that the vision was indeed true, a multitude of fish should attend the successful efforts of his servants. The king awoke : his people returned, wondering that in spite of the cold and severe frost their success had been so great. And the spring of the year 878 drew on, and he had now been nearly a year in exile, and St. Neot, the messenger of wrath, came to confirm the glad tidings.

Watchful and sleepless, the king was lying in his bed, when, by permission of the merciful God, His servant St. Neot appeared to him.

“Knowest thou not,” he said, “how vain are the thoughts of man. They who hope in the Lord shall take courage, they shall make to themselves wings as eagles, they shall fly and shall not faint. Now, therefore, up and be doing ; for thou shalt go forth to battle with these heathens, and the Lord shall be with thee, and they shall flee before thee. And king Guthrum and his nobles shall be humbled, and shall leave their idols and be baptized. And behold, I will go with thee, and with power from above I will lead thy forces to the battle, and they shall be victorious. The seventh week after Easter thou shalt go forth.

In the meantime, the Danes had been doing their work most fearfully. Hinguar and Hubba, like two incarnate fiends, had penetrated to Devonshire, sparing neither sex nor age, pillaging, slaying, and burning all before them : here, however, they met their first check. St. Edmund’s blood, which cried aloud to heaven, was here to be avenged. Ragnar’s fierce sons had run their course. The scanty remnant of the faithful Saxons were gathered with Odun, earl of Devon, in the castle of Cynuit. The place was without water ; and the camp of the Danes lay round it, secure of a bloodless victory. Providence, however, had ordered the issue otherwise. A fierce sally of the garrison, in the grey of a March morning, as desperate as it was unexpected, ended in the total rout of the Danish forces ; Hinguar and Hubba were destroyed by the sword of Odun, and the disenchanted raven, now lifeless, and with drooping wings, fell into the hands of the conquerors. By this defeat, however, the Danish

power was not materially weakened. The whole authority was now centred in the person of Guthrum, who lay with the large division of the army on the Downs, in Wiltshire. Fresh hordes were continually arriving from the Baltic to recruit their losses, and except from the spirit the Saxons had acquired from the success in Devonshire, Alfred seemed no nearer his throne than he had been the year preceding : he had received a promise, however, and he believed. And now Easter was past, and his adventurous spirit leading him to neglect no human means of success, in the disguise of a harper, he visited in person the Danish camp at Ethendun. He played and sung before Guthrum himself, and having made his observations, retired.

And then came Whitsuntide, "and the king rode forth to Brixton, to Egbert's rock on the eastern side of Selwood, and all Somersetshire, and all Wiltshire, and all the men of Hampshire, who had not fled beyond the sea, came forth to meet him, and when they saw him as it were come to life again, after so long eclipse, they were filled with unrestrainable rapture." For the tide had turned, the favour of God was coming back upon them, and those men whom we lately left desponding cowards, we welcome back the enthusiastic heroes prepared to do all or die. A refreshing change. Thus he found himself once more at the head of an army, and resolved at once to bring matters to an issue. Humanly speaking, success depended on the blow being struck swiftly and promptly, before the Danes were prepared to receive him, and he began his march immediately, in the second week in May, 878. The Danes were still at Ethendun, and he went directly toward them. About five miles west of the spot where

they lay, is the small village of Iley : here the Saxons halted, the night preceding the last battle ; and Alfred lay there in his tent, and again, as before, appeared the venerable figure of St. Neot.

“ His form was like an angel of God ; his hair was white as snow ; his garments glistening, and fragrant of the odours of heaven ; he brought armour with him, and thus addressed the king :—‘ Rise up in haste, and prepare for victory ; when thou camest hither, I was with thee, I supported thee ; now, therefore, on the morrow go forth, thou and thy men of war, to the fight, and the Lord shall be with you, even the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, who giveth victory to kings. And behold, I go before you to the battle, and thy enemies shall fall by thy arm before mine eyes, and thou shalt smite them with the edge of the sword.’ ”

On the eastern slope of the high range of hills which rise from the valley of the Avon, lay the camp of the Danes ; so rapid, so energetic, had been Alfred’s movements, that he himself brought the tidings of his rising, and no hint of danger had reached them to disturb their quiet. There lay the vast army wrapped in negligent repose. The morning mist hung like a dull heavy curtain over the camp. The damp pennons drooped upon their staffs. The drowsy sentinels were slumbering at their posts. Not a watch-dog barked, not a note of alarm was given, while troop after troop of the Saxons defiled silently over the brow of the hill, and took their station on the summit of the slope. Foremost rode king Alfred : his small army was now all disposed for the charge, and he briefly and impressively addressed them. “ Heavily,” he said, “ has the scourge of God fallen on us for our sins. Our homes

are desolate, our fields wasted, our holy places are destroyed, our priests are fled, and the hands of these heathen hounds run red with the blood of our dearest kinsmen. We have suffered, we have been forgiven. The day of retribution is come. We alone remain of all the armies of West Saxony ; but we are not alone, for God is with us. He has said, and will he not perform ? This day shall the heathen be delivered into your hands. On now, therefore, ye servants of the Most High ! For your God and for your country, for your hearths and for your homes, fall on and spare not !” A thousand voices rent the sky,—“ The Lord shall give strength to His people. Blessed be God.” A thousand swords flashed back the red rays of the rising sun. The mist rolled off ; streamed out proudly the royal standard in the morning breeze, and down like a mountain torrent crashed the Saxons on their foe. At that first awful shout, each slumbering Dane had started into life in terrified surprise. At the first fierce rush they fled in panic and fell in heaps under the sword of the destroyer ; yet among their vast hosts Alfred’s army was but as a small river to the broad ocean, and their scattered bands soon rallied with desperate fury. Hell sent her spirits to their aid, the Yotuns came flashing through the air, and Loki rode upon his dragon steed and fought for Guthrum, and backwards and forwards swayed the tide of the battle.

What awful figure is that which has seized king Alfred’s standard, and waves the Saxons on with majestic hand ? Aslauga’s demons knew the servant of the Mighty One, and fled back howling to their icy prisons. Terror struck their weapons from the hands of the Pagans ; they dared not look on him, but fled on every side. None saw him come ; none save Alfred knew

whence he was ; but there stood Neot, once more upon a field of battle in the same terrific majesty as the king before had seen him. High he waved the royal standard, marshalling the Saxons on to victory. Fierce and fast they followed on their fainting foe, and gave no quarter. The measure they had dealt to others was now dealt to them. Thousands upon thousands lay dead ; but still pressed on that fearful standard bearer, and thousands were yet to fall. And the sun rolled on to the west through that long May day, and made no comment. It went down, and that terrible carnage had not ceased which has left so imperishable a record in the memory of the Wiltshire peasant, that none ever now pass Slaughter-ford without a shudder and a prayer. Never again was Neot seen on earth.

A merry peal rung out from the bells of Wedmore,¹ and fast came crowding in the people from all the country round ; for this was the glad day when God's servants in all the earth meet together to acknowledge the glory of the Eternal Trinity ; and to offer prayers for the defence of the true faith of the Church of Christ, for ever and ever. And this day too in England were to be offered public thanksgivings to God for its great deliverance from the heathen. Scattered on the plain before the town lay the tents of the Saxon army, and smiled in the bright sunshine ; and banners were waving, and all were dressed in holiday array and looked blithe and happy. Nature had dressed herself in her gayest suit, the earth looked greener, the birds carolled more livelily ; all creation seemed to have

¹ There is reason to think *Westminster* is the place intended by this word.

joined together in one glad tribute of thanksgiving. The great Church was thronged with people ; knights and earls, and all the chivalry of West Saxony were gathered in the aisles for the festival, and to witness the great offering which was to be made there that day. Priests and Bishops so long lain in hiding places for fear of the Danes, had come forth again, and now stood in their white robes before the altar. Breathless were they all with expectation, as the great west door rolled back, and the procession appeared. Two and two, with slow and solemn step, a long row of men whose garb announced them candidates for holy baptism, advanced towards the font, king Alfred leading them ; and every heart beat high, and every eye was fixed on that down-cast man who walked hand in hand with him. There was not one of them who knew not the fierce monarch of the Danes, whose ear had not tingled at the name of Guthrum : his head was bare ; the raven plume so fearfully familiar amidst scenes of slaughter and desolation, no longer waved over that princely forehead ; the eye that had flashed forth lightning fires, now beamed with the mild light of penitence and hope. Thirty of Norway's boldest sons attended him, with like demeanour of submission, and the whole train arranged themselves round the font, and knelt and prayed. Then, from beside the high altar, rose the noble bishop Wulfhen, and swept majestically down the aisle, through the wondering multitude, until he reached the kneeling group. With stately step he passed within the circle, and stood beside the font, while with one consent, these haughty warriors forswore their gods, and made profession of the Christian faith. Alfred stood sponsor for the king, and the bishop sprinkled him with the water of purification, and signed him with

the sign of the cross, and he rose up from the ground, Guthrum no longer, but Christian Athelstan. Athelstan, of all names the dearest to Alfred, as that which had once belonged to his deliverer, now he chose for his reconciled enemy, in the hope it might bring a blessing on him. In like manner, the thirty warriors were admitted into the Church of Christ, and then all turned and took the oath of fealty to England's sovereign ; Danes and Saxons, joined in Christian brotherhood, swore eternal peace, and loud pealed the organ at that joyful sight, and from all the multitude assembled, swelled up with one consent to the everlasting God a hymn of gratitude and joy.

A LEGEND OF

St. Bartholomew,

HERMIT AT FARNE, A. D. 1193.

ANY one who reads the Prophets will see that, while all that relates to the humiliation of our most Blessed Lord is most literally fulfilled, the accomplishment of those prophecies which foretell the external glories of His Church is a matter of faith. Where is the kingdom of peace, of justice and righteousness which was to trample upon the oppressor and the warrior? The Church is all this imperfectly, and in tendency; the wickedness of man has spoilt for a time the work of God. But notwithstanding all this misery, the prophecies of Christ's kingdom have found a more complete accomplishment in Christ's Saints, who have all been peaceful, compassionate and zealous for justice. Kings and warriors have literally bowed down before the Saints who have taken up against them the cause of the poor and the widow. And so it may be also that other parts of prophecy, which are commonly interpreted figuratively, have received in a measure a literal fulfilment. For instance, those parts of scripture which relate to the animal creation may have been fulfilled much more literally than is commonly supposed, in some of Christ's hidden Saints who have given up all for His

sake. In proportion as the knowledge of the Lord has filled the earth, so also may Christ's little ones have walked unharmed among beasts of prey, or by their gentleness won to their sides the shyest of the inhabitants of the forest or the rock. If Christ's servants have for His sake dwelt in "the habitation of dragons and the court of owls,"¹ where "the wild beasts of the desert meet the wild beasts of the island," what wonder if "the beasts of the field have honoured them, the dragons and the owls,"² "the cormorant and the bittern."³ He who dwells for Christ's sake in the desert, "where the satyrs cry unto their fellows," in the dry places where he seeks rest who can find none, must not be surprised if he sees strange shapes and hears startling sounds. And many of the words and actions of our blessed Lord seem to show that it is dangerous to pronounce too soon that the language of scripture is figurative, while at the same time they show such a strange connexion between evil spirits and the animal creation, that power over the one would seem to imply a power over the other. During those wonderful days which he spent in the wilderness, he was with the wild beasts as well as with devils. He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven, and with His leave beings who had once been angels entered into the filthiest of beasts. So also the eyes of His Saints may have been opened to see the shame of the fallen archangel; and what wonder if under shapeless and uncouth forms he strives to scare from his knees the Saint whose prayers and fasts abridge his usurped dominion.

So also other prophecies connected with the opening of the invisible world upon the Saints, may have been

¹ Is. xi. 6. ² Is. xxxiv. 13, 14. ³ Is. xviii. 20. Is. xxxiv. 11.

more literally fulfilled than is commonly believed. It has been foretold that the sons and daughters of the Church should prophesy, that the young men should see visions and the old men dream dreams ; we need not therefore be startled at meeting with such things in the history of Christendom in any age. It is true indeed that from the moment that our blessed Lord disappeared from the sight of the disciples, that became an object of faith which before had been seen and handled, even the glorified body of Him who is at the right hand of God ; yet we know that He has been pleased to show Himself in the reality of that body to His apostles, St. Paul and St. John. Nay one day every eye shall see Him ; there is therefore nothing contrary to faith in supposing that even He may have appeared in visions to His Saints.

All these openings of the invisible world, whether of good or of evil beings, are of course subject to the present imperfection of our nature, and yet this does not interfere with the reality of them. Our notions of the ever-blessed Trinity are most dark and imperfect, embodied in human words and human ideas, and yet this does not prevent there being in them a truth real and objective, which we know can be as little the creation of our mind as material things which we see and touch. So again there have been false Christs and false teachers, yet there is also the One True Christ with the holy Doctors of the Church. The visions seen and the voices heard by the Saints are expressed in terms, so to speak, of Time and Space to which we are at present bound, so that it is often hard to distinguish them from the phantoms of imagination. The clear spiritual vision which the Saints possess habitually, may enable them to discern heavenly things so vividly that their

meditations may sometimes take the nature of ecstacy, without its being possible to fix the exact limits where contemplation ends and vision begins. Again noises are heard in the stillness of the night, which are drowned in the busy hum of day ; and they may have been mistaken for supernatural sounds ; the chill night air may have cramped the limbs of a Saint as he knelt on the cold stones before an altar, and he may have attributed it to the agency of the wicked one. He may in these instances have been sometimes right and at other times wrong, but it would be foolish and faithless to reject at once the notion that the devil had troubled a Saint at his prayers. Here at least we cannot weigh our enlightened *experience* against the testimony of a superstitious monk in a benighted age, for what experience have we of nights spent on the cold ground in prayer ? As well might the Indian prince urge the experience of his tender limbs against the fact that the hardy Englishman ever has to bear the pinching of ice and snow. Again let no one trouble himself about the danger of fanaticism ; these are not practical questions to us ; when we have hermits and monks amongst us, then let us begin to be anxious about drawing the line between false visions and true.

All this is a fitting introduction to the life of a Saint which contains in it many startling and even grotesque stories, which yet rest on contemporary authority. No flaw is to be found in dates,⁴ and many personages flit

⁴ The date of St. Bartholomew's death is remarkably fixed by the circumstance mentioned in his life, that he died in a year on which the Feast of St. John Baptist was on the seventh Thursday after Ascension-day, which must therefore have fallen on the sixth of May, and Easter on the twenty-eighth of March.

across the wild scene who appear elsewhere as real beings of flesh and blood in the pages of history. The life of St. Bartholomew is written by a monk, who mentions several persons from whom he had heard what he relates, and who had got their intelligence from the lips of the Saint himself. The stories rest on various authorities, some on the testimony of the rude fishermen who lived on his island, others on that of his friends ; but it is time that the reader should judge for himself.

1. *Brother Bartholomew in the world.*

Among the hermits of the twelfth century, Bartholomew is a remarkable personage ; his character stands out clear and distinct amidst the strange tales told about him, one not unvarying. We may feel startled and disgusted that such a figure with an ill smell of goatskins should come betwixt the wind and our nobility ; but, turn away as we will, there he still stands to reproach our sloth and luxury, the genuine product

This only happened twice in the twelfth century, viz. in 1182 and 1193. Thus far the Bollandists : but the date is still further fixed to 1193 by the fact that he was forty-two years and six months in the island of Farne ; now if he had died in 1182, he would have left Durham in 1140, which cannot be, as it is expressly stated that he quitted the monastery under Prior Laurence, who did not succeed to the office till 1149. There is a manuscript in the Bodleian Library in which the life of the Saint is inscribed by the author, to Bertram, Prior of Durham. This proves that the life was written under the very Prior, in whose time the Saint died. The same manuscript gives the name of the author at full length, and verifies the conjecture of the Bollandists that it was Galfridus.

of an age of faith. He was not always St. Bartholomew ; his parents, whose condition is unknown, gave him the name of Tosti. He was born at Whitby, in Yorkshire, in the early part of the twelfth century. The north of England in the reign of our early Norman kings, was the stronghold of all that was Saxon ; this circumstance, as well as his name, makes it probable that he was of old English blood ; but his companions laughed at the quaint sound of the Saxon boy's name, and his parents changed it for the Norman name of William. In his boyhood and youth he was of a wild and stubborn character, brought on probably by the jests of his playfellows, and he cared but little about spiritual things. Our blessed Lord however did not leave him without warning. One night he dreamed that he was in a place of surpassing beauty, and that there rose before him an intense light, like a cloud of dazzling white, or the dawn of a beautiful day. As he gazed on its splendour, he saw our blessed Lord standing on high, and near Him Mary His mother, and the apostles Peter and John. Then the blessed Virgin looked upon him with a sweet countenance and bade the Apostles lead him to her. When he stood before her who was called by Christ the mother of His beloved disciple, and who is the mother of all whom He has loved eternally, then with a sweet voice she said to him, Follow thou the steps of my Son, that He may have pity on thee, and pray humbly to Him who is merciful. Then William fell on his face and cried three times, Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me ; and the Lord lifted up His hand and blessed him. Twice did this vision appear to him in his sleep, and once when he was awake ; but great as was the impression made upon his mind, it bore no open fruit till many

years after. Instead of seeking quiet in the bosom of a monastery, his spirit was still restless and untamed. He left his country, and in quest of adventures went into Norway, then the refuge of many discontented spirits of Saxon blood.⁵ He had not long been there however, when he put himself under the direction of a priest of the country, and made such spiritual progress under him, that the Bishop of the place ordained him priest. Still there was much in him to subdue ; his spirit was one which delighted to wrestle with the storms which howl through the forests of those savage regions, and his curiosity was roused by the dark superstitions which lingered among them. He was once walking with a youth, who suddenly exclaimed that he saw an evil spirit. Friend, I would fain see him, was the answer of the priest. The youth said, Put thy feet upon mine, that thou touch not the ground, and thou shalt see him not only now but always. Then William laughed aloud when he thought of the strange companion which his friend wished to provide for him. He afterwards used to relate that he bethought himself just in time that his faith would be in danger, if he, a Christian priest, had an evil spirit ever before his eyes. This seems to have contributed to sober his mind, and he began to think of settling in life, as it is called. The marriage of priests, though forbidden by the canons, was not then so uncommon as it afterwards became ; and he cast his eyes on one of the fair damsels of Norway. The maiden smiled upon him, and the father favoured his suit, but Christ had other views for

⁵ Simeon Dunelm. in. ann. 1074. The same authority states that English priests were in great request in Norway.

His servant, and from some unknown cause, he left Norway unmarried.

Three years had passed over him since he quitted his native country, and he came back to it a priest and an altered man ; and almost as soon as he had landed in England he for a few days officiated in a Church in Northumberland. Still however he had not found his place in Christ's kingdom ; the vision with which his Lord had favoured him in his youth rushed upon his mind. This seemed to mark him out for some extraordinary mode of life, and with the energy which ever characterized him, he at once set out for Durham, where he entered as a novice the Cathedral monastery. Here when with his newly shaven head and his Benedictine habit, he entered the Church with the rest of the novices, and as was the custom at Durham, prostrated himself before the high altar ; it seemed as if the figure on the crucifix stretched out its arms to welcome this new soldier of the cross. The name which he took in religion was Bartholomew, after the holy Apostle, and he soon won the hearts of the brethren by the gentleness which now appeared in his character, and by his fervour at the divine office. He had remained for a year in the monastery, training up his soul to obedience and humility, when he was called away to another and a sterner scene. St. Cuthbert appeared to him one night in a dream, and bade him go to the island of Farne to lead the life of a hermit. Next morning he enquired of the brethren where this island lay, for he had never heard of it. He then went to Prior Laurence and begged for leave to quit the monastery, to live henceforth on that spot where St. Cuthbert lived and died. The good Prior shook his head : a hermit's life was not one for a novice, nor was

Farne so pleasant an abode as one who had never seen it might fancy. Brother Bartholomew's earnestness however at length prevailed, and with the Prior's leave, and the prayers of the convent, he set out for his new abode, early in December, 1151, and in the first week of Advent.

2. *Of the isle in which brother Bartholomew lived.*

If ever monks had a prospect of happiness, it was the monks of St. Mary and St. Cuthbert at Durham. The lazy old canons had been expelled and provided for elsewhere to make room for them, and the discipline of their monastery was at its height under a holy and learned Prior. The munificence of kings and Bishops had placed them above secular cares; streams were bridged over, mills erected, and fish ponds dug, for their sole use.⁶ Villages were assigned to them,⁷ where dwelt forty merchants to supply their wants, free of all the customs and tolls paid to the Bishop. Splendid buildings were rising about them on every side, and their chapter house had been but lately finished for their use.⁸ Their altars blazed with gold and jewels, and on the high altar was a famous crucifix, adorned with gems by William the Conqueror. A greater contrast to this religious house than Bartholomew's new dwelling place can hardly be conceived. The island of Farne is described⁹ as a circle of solid rock, the top of which is thinly strewn over with a layer of barren soil.

⁶ See for instance the account of Ralph Flambard's works, *Anglia Sac.* p. 708.

⁷ *Cart. ap. Dugdale*, vol. i. p. 237.

⁸ *Anglia Sac.* vol. i. 709.

⁹ This account applies only to the times of Galfridus.

On its south side it is separated by a channel of about two miles in breadth from the shore ; to the east and west a belt of rocks protect it from the fury of the sea, while on the north it lies open to the whole force of the waves, in the midst of which it lies like the broken and defenceless hull of a shipwrecked vessel. Sometimes when the tide rises higher than usual, and the wild storms of that rugged coast come in to its aid, the waves make an inroad on the land, and the salt foam is blown over the whole island, wetting the shivering inhabitant to the skin, and penetrating the crevices of his habitation. Near the shelving beach which formed the landing-place, was a low hut of unhewn stone and turf, built by St. Cuthbert. A narrow path leads up through the rock into St. Cuthbert's chapel ; it was situated in a hollow so shut in on all sides by walls of naked rock, that nothing could be seen from thence of the wide waste of waters around, or of the landward prospect on the other side. St. Cuthbert was said by his own labour to have deepened the hollow, so that when he knelt in prayer he could see nothing but the blue sky, bright with stars, far over his head, or resting with its lowering clouds on the edge of this rocky chamber. Here also by his prayers a clear stream gushed from the hard rock, according to the promise of the Lord that He would give waters in the wilderness, and that it should spring forth to give drink to His people, to His chosen. Rough as was the material of which the island was formed, two springs welled from the depths of the rock, to which the sailors often came to water their ships ; and this seems to have been the only natural production on the spot, which could be obtained without toil. This unpromising place was not likely to attract inhab-

itants or visitors, and pirates, sailors and fishermen seem to have been its chief occasional inmates.

Besides the drawbacks which have been mentioned, the place had an ill name, which would of itself have kept it lonely. It was said by the people of the country to be haunted. The islets around it were especially said to be the habitation of demons, and no fisherman would have dared to moor his skiff to them after night-fall. On one islet all shipwrecked mariners were buried, and there above all, the howls of evil spirits were said to have been heard mingling with the rise and fall of the blasts which swept over the long grass upon their graves. Here also amidst the fantastic wreaths of mist, the fishermen used to see strange figures clad in the hoods of monks, and with long beards pendant from their foul features, riding on goats and brandishing spears among the tombs ; till crosses were planted in the sand all round the spot, and the demons as soon as they saw them, flitted around and wheeled away into the darkness. It is hard to say why demons should be supposed to haunt the graves of Christian mariners, but there were other and better reasons for thinking that the hermits of St. Cuthbert's isle were disturbed in their devotions by evil spirits. Christian corpses were more likely to scare away than to invite devils ; but Satan would have an object in frightening away the Saint whose prayers were a thorn in his side. " He who," says the old monk, whose narrative we follow, " is led by the Spirit into this wilderness, must of necessity be tempted by the devil, and either practise himself in virtue, or quit this place which is made for virtue." The advance of Christianity had scared away the evil one, so that he hid himself in these lonely islets, as he had retired into the sandy

deserts of the Thebais, to the wonderful rock of St. Michael in Normandy, or the shaggy wood from the depths of which he was driven by St. Seine.

3. *How Bartholomew lived in his hermitage.*

Bartholomew did not find himself alone in his new abode ; a monk named Ebwin had established himself there before him. He had probably also belonged to the convent of Durham, the authorities of which were still the spiritual superiors of the hermits of Farne. From this person the new inmate obtained by no means a hearty welcome ; he was so much of a hermit that he would have no one to share his solitude, not even another hermit. Very few men can bear to be alone ; and without a special vocation, none should make the attempt. Even our blessed Lord did not go into the wilderness without being led thither by the Spirit. Many men however from fanaticism, and wilfulness, or because their temper has been soured by the ill treatment of the world, have lived and died in solitude. This is one of the strange freaks of ill-guided human nature, and can only be distinguished from religious loveliness by its fruits. Ebwin could live alone, but he could not bear to have a rival in his loneliness. He troubled Bartholomew's peace by bitter taunts, intending to tease him into anger, or to scare him away altogether. He however failed in his object ; a few years before he might have succeeded, but Bartholomew had learned to discipline himself to patience and meekness in the monastery of Durham. His patient endurance wore out the obstinacy of his companion ; the island could well have supported both, but Ebwin did not

love partnership, and fairly quitted Farne, leaving him alone.

The reader probably is curious to know what the brother Bartholomew could find to do in his new abode. The question however is easily answered ; he had as much to do as any labourer who has to work for his daily bread. He had a cow to tend, and a field, which must be dug and be sown with barley, and his crops were to be reaped and gathered in when the harvest time came round. A strange labourer indeed he was with his monkish mantle, over which was thrown a rough and sleeveless cloak lined with shaggy skin ! When he laid down the spade or the reaping hook, his labours were not over ; he had a boat in which he wrestled with the wild waves which run violently among the islets and rocks along the coast, or paddled over the smooth sea where it lay bright and glittering beneath the summer sun. Thus he was fisherman, grazier, and labourer all at once, and as will appear by and by, he combined the office of pilot as well. But whatever he was doing, the wind might drive the rain and the spray, and the sun might shed its burning beams upon his head, which was never covered by cowl or cap. This however was but his external employment. There are wonders in the spiritual world of which men unused to meditation have no conception, and which are to be the employment of the blessed in heaven. Even on earth the holy doctors have spent their lives in drawing them out in words ; the cherubim desire to look into them ; no one then need be surprised if a hermit could find occupation in wondering at such mysteries as the Holy Trinity and all the events involved in the Incarnation of the Lord. Every day he offered up the immaculate Lamb in sacrifice to

His Father on the altar of St. Cuthbert's oratory. All day long, whatever he was doing, and a great part of every night, he was either singing the psalms of David or kneeling in intercessory prayer. The words of the psalms were sweeter than honey to his throat, and he felt them burning in his heart the more he repeated them, so that he said the whole psalter every day once, twice, or even three times.

While he was thus striving to have his conversation in heaven, he took care to take up his cross with Christ, lest his thoughts should degenerate into a luxurious self-contemplation. He who suffers with his Lord feels quite sure of the reality of heaven, and Bartholomew bearing his cross over the rugged stones of Farne, sympathized, so to speak, with Him who was dead and is alive, in a way which few can understand. A rough shirt of hair was worn by him next to his skin ; the few hours which he could spare from psalmody and prayer during the night, were spent upon a pallet from which the hardiest of the world's soldiers would have shrunk. It was simply a few bed coverings thrown upon a hurdle ; surely no very loud alarum would be needed to rouse a man from such a bed as this. Long fasts and a perpetual abstinence from meat subdued his body to his soul ; for the first few years of his sojourn on the island, he used to eat the fish which he had caught by his own labour ; but he afterwards gave up even this poor indulgence. Prayer and fasting are the weapons appointed by our blessed Lord to subdue every kind of evil spirit. He Himself, though clothed in the flesh that had sinned was invincible, because He was the Lord from heaven ; and yet He fasted for forty days, and at last felt the pangs of hunger before he encountered the wily tempter. How then could His ser-

vant fire in the place of devils without putting on the armour which the Lord had sanctified for his use.

4. *How brother Bartholomew was not always alone.*

Stern as was his mode of life, Bartholomew's body was not worn, nor his spirit broken ; his face instead of being pale and emaciated, had a healthful colour ; "so that," says the monk, "one would have supposed him to have pampered his body on dainties." Sadness he ever accounted to be a sin, and his blithe countenance and cheerful speech bore witness to the doctrine which he professed. And he soon found that hermit as he was, he would have numerous opportunities of testing his kindness of heart and sweetness of temper. The island had ever been from time to time visited by Norwegian and Danish sailors, and the poor fishermen who lived on the opposite coast often came to pray in St. Cuthbert's oratory before they began their night of toilsome labour. These were the poor ones of the earth, and the hermit delighted in instructing them. When the northern sailors were windbound in this rugged part, he soothed their impatience and even from his own little store contrived to help them when their provisions failed. He once even killed his cow, when he had nothing else to set before some poor strangers who had nothing to eat. His kindness won the hearts of the rough sailors, and his holiness taught them reverence for the Lord whose servant he was. Christ also enlightened the hermit's soul, so that he was able to foretell the dangers of the weather ; and if he bade them go in God's name and blessed them, they would always set sail though the black clouds scudded across

the sky, and the winds howled and the waves were dashed against the capes which stretched beyond each other along the shore. They applied to him in every difficulty, and he thus had numerous opportunities of tempering their ferocity ; they believed that all his warnings came to pass, and hardly durst disobey him. On one occasion a boy, belonging to a vessel, had gone down into the boat to fish, and had forgotten to tie it to the stern ; the consequence was, that the boy was carried off by the current among the rocks and shoals. The poor sailors as usual came to the hermit's cell, and cried out, "Brother Bartholomew, come and help us." He came out smiling and said, "Why do ye call me, and what will ye have me do?" On hearing of their trouble, he accompanied them on board their vessel, and (though it does not appear how) the boy and the boat soon appeared safe and sound. The captain immediately seized on the lad and took up a stick to punish him severely. The hermit stayed the hand of the brutal man, and bade him remember that no one was to be punished in this holy island. The captain replied that he was not in the island, but on the deck of his vessel ; and although the holy man foretold that he should suffer for his cruelty, he beat the boy unmercifully. When the vessel returned, the sailors told brother Bartholomew that the captain had died the second day of the voyage. It was not long however before the fame of his sanctity brought visitors of a different stamp from his poor friends the sailors. Every man who lives under a sense of right and wrong must often have been troubled not only with temptations to visitations of duty, but with perplexities as to what in particular cases is his duty. He who lets himself quietly float down the stream of life, knows nothing of the

mysteries of his own being, and of the troubles which may arise in the soul of a Christian apparently without external cause ; but they who venture more boldly forth for Christ's sake, soon find that they have an inward as well as an outward cross to bear. " They who go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters, these men see the wonders of the Lord in the deep." The soul of the penitent too is in fearful need of guidance when first the whole horrors of sin bursts upon it. For cases such as these, Christianity has created a science of spiritual things, and all the fearful diseases of the religious mind have been examined and classified by Catholic doctors. Yet after all none is so well qualified to carry the theory of this science into practice as he who has learnt by intense self-examination, and by spiritual asceticism to know himself and the wiles of the tempter. It is a gentle craft which soothes the aching soul, and pours oil and wine into the wounds of him who has been half dead ; and Bartholomew soon found that his fame as a physician brought men from all parts to kneel at his feet. Men of all ranks came before him in this tribunal of confession, and many a high born oppressor of the poor bowed down, and trembled before the goat-skin garment of the poor hermit. Who but such a confessor could have forced men like the wild border barons of the north to relax their iron grasp on the spoils of the poor and to atone for their sins by penance ? Nor was this all : many a poor monk who was afflicted with dryness of heart, and went through his offices with listlessness and distaste, was taught by him to be patient till Christ visited his soul with the waters of consolation.

The sweet gentleness of his temper was such that it appeared in his countenance and his gait. Even the

wild birds on the sea shore learned not to fly away at the approach of the figure, which glided gently by them on the sea-shore, or so often remained immovable wrapt in contemplation. The habits of the sea gulls and cormorants which abound on that lonely island seem to have struck Galfridus with admiration. The eyder ducks especially raised his wonder ; they came regularly at certain seasons in large flocks to deposit their eggs, and while sitting in their nests never feared the approach or even the touch of man. When however the young ones were hatched, they became as wild as ever, and the whole party took to the waters again, and migrated from the island. Bartholomew allowed no one to cast stones at the birds : he even tamed one of them, which came regularly to feed out of his hand every day. Unfortunately however when he was out fishing, a hawk pursued this poor bird into the chapel, and killed it, leaving the feathers and the bones lying on the portal of the holy place. The assassin however could not find his way out of the chapel, and kept wheeling round and round the building, beating against the windows and the walls. At this time brother Bartholomew entered and found the cruel bird with its talons and bill still bloody. He mourned bitterly over the fate of his poor favourite, and caught the hawk ; he kept it for two days without food, to punish it for its crime, and then, seized with compassion, let go his guilty prisoner. At another time the Saint was sitting on the sea shore, when he was surprised to feel a cormorant close by his side, pulling with its bill the corner of his garment. He rose and followed the bird along the beach, till he came to a hole in the rock down which one of the young ones had fallen. He soon extricated

the trembling bird from its danger, and restored it to its mother.

As brother Bartholomew had taken upon himself that mode of life of which our blessed Lord gave a model when he retired into the wilderness, so he suffered also the same sort of temptations. The wild and lonely island on which he served Christ, had always, as we have said, the reputation of being the special abode of evil spirits. Desolate places have often an ill name ; amid the hum of worldly occupations and the glare of day, Satan appears not, for men think not of him, and why should he arouse them from their security ? but when men of God retire into desolate places to serve Christ, then Satan unmasks himself, for they have no lethargy in which he would leave them, and they have ventured into the wilderness, his own peculiar dwelling place. They are his open enemies, and he has been known to meet them openly. As the devil under loathsome shapes had striven to frighten away St. Antony, so he attacked Bartholomew. Foul and hideous shapes of wild beasts seemed to frisk about him when he was at his prayers ; and frightful visages grinned upon him out of the darkness. He often felt a hand plucking his cowl when he was on his knees, and even at the very altar the devil strove to divert his attention by seizing the border of his chasuble. One dark morning, when matins were over, and the lamp in the oratory was extinguished, as he was lying prostrate on the steps of St. Mary's altar, he felt a weight over all his limbs and a choking sensation in his throat, which he ever attributed to the evil spirit. For some time he was unable to speak, but at last he shook off the impediment, and cried upon St. Mary for help. This is but a specimen of the attacks under which he suffered, and against

which his only weapons were the sign of the cross and the holy water, with which he sprinkled his cell.

5. *How Prior Thomas lived and died at Farne.*

For five years did the hermit remain at Farne, the only inhabitant of the island ; but events were taking place at Durham which were to furnish him with a companion in his hermitage. The Prior Laurence had died in the meanwhile, and had been succeeded by Prior Absolon, who had died also, and had left the dignity to a brother of the monastery, named Thomas. Up to this time internal peace seems to have reigned at Durham, but now they had got a Bishop who seemed anxious to be Bishop and Prior at once. The Priors of Durham were great men indeed ; when William of Carilpho replaced the secular canons with lay monks of St. Benedict, he gave the Prior all the ancient rights of the dean of the chapter, and many more besides. Many fair manors and broad lands were then given to the convent and carefully separated from the property of the see. Over these the Prior had the rights of a feudal baron, with Sak and Sok, Tol and Theam, and Infangthief, and¹ all the various powers which have to our ears a most barbarous sound, but which nevertheless conveyed a most substantial privilege. Besides which the Prior sat in a stall on the left hand side of the choir, with all the rights of an Abbot ; he appointed all the officials of the convent, and he officiated at the

¹ Sok and Sak imply the right of holding a court, Tol, that of levying tolls. Theam that of restraining and judging bondsmen. Infangthief, that of punishing a thief caught on one's own fief.

altars of the Cathedrals as in his own Church. But though the Prior of Durham was a great man, the Bishop was a greater, and a prelate now sate on the throne who was disposed to make the most of his authority. Hugh Pudsey had been vehemently opposed by the Cistercian interest, that is, by Henry Archbishop of York, and by St. Bernard, but on the death of Eugenius had succeeded in obtaining the confirmation of his election from his successor. He was a magnificent prelate, and afterwards offered Richard to accompany him at the head of his own troops to the Holy Land. The warlike monarch however preferred the Bishop's money to his personal services, and left him behind as High Justiciar of England. It should be said however for Hugh Pudsey, that the monks do not seem to have disliked, though they feared him ; at least he did not go so far as his successor, who turned away the water courses of the monks, attempted to force his way into the chapter, and all but plucked the Prior down from the altar one feast of St. Cuthbert.² However Hugh Pudsey seems to have reigned absolute in the Abbey, and when the Prior Thomas opposed his will, the monks were weak enough to allow him to be deposed in direct violation of their original charter. Thomas, weary of the bickerings and cabals among which he had been living, determined to spend the rest of his days in strict penitence at Farne.

The coming of this new inmate was a trial to Bartholomew ; he had as yet been uncontrolled in his religious exercises, he had now to consult the comfort of another. It was now to be proved whether he was so wedded to his austerities as not to give up as many of

² *Anglia Sacra*. vol. i. 728.

them as were shown to be against the will of God. He began well, for he threw off the hair shirt which he had now worn for five years, because from long usage it had become foul and fetid, and would disgust his companion. An unhappy cause of discussion however occurred, which marred the harmony even of this small society. Thomas could not bear the long fasts to which Bartholomew was accustomed, and Bartholomew would not remain at his meals as long as Thomas wished. The ex-Prior, though the brother in every respect gave up to his will, grew angry and called him a hypocrite. Bartholomew remained silent under his reproaches, but could not wait to endure them ; he fled back to the monastery of Durham, and the brethren were one day astonished to see this strange figure rise up as it were from the invisible world among them. Thomas immediately recognized his fault, and bewailed the loss of his companion with tears. It was not however till the Prior entreated, and the convent commanded, and the Bishop warned, that brother Bartholomew could be prevailed upon to return to Farne. This affair was however of use to both : Thomas learned to command his temper, and Bartholomew also learned a lesson of patience. From that day forth they lived together in the greatest harmony. Another advantage was gained ; the convent promised to supply them with a stock of provisions and a suit of clothes every year, so that he could now give alms and better supply the wants of his friends the sailors from the produce of his own labour. It is not known how long Thomas remained on the island ; it is probable however that his weary pilgrimage was soon ended. The closing scene of it is all that is recorded. A brother of the convent, who was present, relates that while angels floated before the eyes of

the dying man, Bartholomew, who was watching by his side, saw a foul and hideous monster crouching in a corner of the room, and mourning over the future glory of the soul which was passing away ; and it was some time before he could drive it away with the holy water which lay as usual near the bed of death.

6. *How brother Bartholomew closed his days in peace.*

The even tenor of a hermit's life does not admit of much variety, and little remains to be told though he lived in all forty-two years and six months on the island. Towards the close of his life the invisible world seems several times to have opened upon him in visions. William, a monk of Durham, related to Galfridus how in the dead of night he was reciting with Bartholomew the office of the blessed Virgin, when he saw through the east window the sky shining with an intense supernatural blaze, which lighted the whole of the dark oratory. The same brother also related to Galfridus a vision which he had heard from the hermit's lips. Bartholomew said that on the joyful night of our Lord's nativity, after having said the midnight mass, he had quitted St. Cuthbert's chapel to see if morning had yet dawned upon the sea, and it was time to begin the second mass ; on returning to the oratory he was astonished to see at the altar a priest of a venerable aspect in pontifical vestments ready to officiate. In awe and wonder he drew near, and the priest went through the Holy Sacrifice, and then vanished away leaving on Bartholomew's mind the certainty that the blessed Cuthbert had descended to officiate in the chapel in which he had passed so many hours when on

earth. All these things prepared the hermit to expect his end, and he felt quite sure that he was to die, when one night as he was watching in prayer, his bell rung three times with a low and gentle sound, though no human hand had touched it. Shortly after this, on Ascension-day, 1193, he fell ill, though his disease seems to have been old age rather than any other. He told some of his visitors that his end was approaching, and the brethren of Lindisfarne from that moment often came to see him ; some monks of Coldingham whom he especially loved, also came to visit him for the last time. For seven weeks during which his illness lasted, he neither ate nor drank. For many years before, he had had no bed but the hard ground, and now he would not allow one to be made, but remained in a sitting posture, sometimes even rising and walking about. But whatever he did he was wrapt in prayer, and hardly spoke at all. Shortly before he died, the brethren who were standing around were frightened by strange and loud noises on the roof, and one fancied that a shapeless form had alighted on the ground, close behind him. The servant of God roused himself, and said, "Wretch, what dost thou here ? thou hast lost thy labour, for thou canst find nothing in me." The brethren asked him where he would be buried ; he answered, "I would have my body lie here, where I hope that my spirit will be received by its Creator, and where I have fought during a very little time for the Lord, and have suffered many tribulations for that consolation which is in heaven." On the feast of the Nativity of St. John Baptist, he fell asleep in the Lord. As soon as his soul had passed away, a brother of Lindisfarne dreamed that Bartholomew was dead. He immediately aroused the convent, and a party of monks at once manned a

little vessel, and crossed the waters which separate Farne from the Holy Island. When these hooded sailors had brought their vessel into the little harbour, they found that the brother had spoken truth. Bartholomew was lying dead; not far from him, they found a stone coffin which he had some time before procured. When it had arrived, he had laid himself down full length within it, and had found that it was too short. With his own hands he then had chiselled out the stone till it was large enough to contain his whole body. In this coffin which he had prepared, they now laid him with many tears.⁵ He was buried on the south side of the chapel, close to the fountain which sprung from the earth at St. Cuthbert's prayers. There his body probably still lies, forgotten and unknown. The spirit however of the holy men who once lived in Farne seems still to dwell there. It was on Bartholomew's island that that christian maiden lived who not many years ago ventured her life to save the crew of a shipwrecked vessel, and whom God has now taken to Himself.

³ This last circumstance is mentioned in the Bodleian manuscript before mentioned. The Bollandists unfortunately lost the last pages of their manuscript, and therefore only copied the close of the Saint's life from Capgrave. It should be added, that the Bollandists mention several English martyrologies in which St. Bartholomew is named on the 24th of June.

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